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Version: Version of Record

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<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.0000be9c>

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A Rich Reward in Tears

*Hippolytus and Phaedra in drama, dance, opera and
film*

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B.A. (Hons), M.Phil. (Oxon)

A thesis presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy



Classical Studies Department
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30 June 2016

A Rich Reward in Tears: Hippolytus and Phaedra in drama, dance, opera and film

TORI LYNN MCKEE

Abstract

This thesis is a study of thematic clusters in the performance reception of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition – the body of reception material based on Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, Seneca’s *Phaedra*, and/or Racine’s *Phèdre*. This is the first comprehensive study of these three major source texts as a collective whole, challenging not only the idea of a single original ‘source text’, but also the idea of a directly linear reception pattern. I visualise the reception of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition as a porous membrane, containing a number of different items, from texts to performances, interacting in a multi-dimensional, fluid way, manifesting itself in different forms depending on the political, social, historical or literary context in which this story has emerged since Racine himself reworked Euripides and Seneca in the late seventeenth century.

Each chapter has a particular thematic focus, within which I provide more detailed case study analyses from particular works across multiple genres. The Introduction provides close readings of the source texts and outlines my cross-genre theoretical framework. The second chapter focusses on the question of consanguinity and the impact of the incest motif on early adaptations. In the third chapter, I explore two 20th-century adaptations, both of which emerged during a decade dominated by Freud’s discoveries. In the fourth chapter, I focus on adaptations that explore and problematise Hippolytus’ sexuality. My fifth chapter focuses exclusively on the operatic and dance traditions, arguing that these genres lead to a prioritisation of the Phaedra character. The thesis concludes with a final chapter which traces the role of the divine within the reception tradition of Hippolytus and Phaedra examining in particular how recent adaptations move away from an earlier focus on psychology and human emotion to a new emphasis on the supernatural forces in the wider world.

*A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Classical Studies at the Open University
30 June 2016*

Acknowledgements

‘Don’t stop believin’. –Journey

I would primarily like to give thanks to my supervisors, Lorna Hardwick, Fiona Macintosh, and Joanna Paul for their advice and guidance, thought-provoking discussion, probing questions, constant motivation, and friendship.

I acknowledge the use of facilities at the University of Oxford, Open University, and University of Cambridge, without which my research would not have been possible. The Open University in particular has provided invaluable skills development and financial support, as well as unparalleled electronic resources. The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) at the University of Oxford has been a particularly valuable research ‘home away from home’ and I have benefitted from much helpful conversation and feedback at various events, including two Postgraduate Symposia where I was invited to present my research.

I thank Margaret Williamson and Yana Zarifi for introducing me to Hippolytus and Phaedra all those years ago at Dartmouth College.

This has been a very part-time endeavour, and I am grateful to my employers over the past six and a half years who have allowed me the flexibility and support to pursue my research alongside full-time employment. In particular, I am grateful to Caroline Mawson at Wadham College, Oxford, John Harding at the University of Cambridge Disability Resource Centre, and Geoff Parks at Jesus College, Cambridge.

I thank my parents, Michael and Denise McKee for moral and financial support, and in particular for encouraging my passion for learning from an early age. I also thank my sisters Cassidy and Seana McKee, for their constant enthusiasm, regular pep-talks, and general positive energy and good vibes. I thank my in-laws Geoff and Gay Sutton, and brother-in-law Richard Sutton for restorative meals and entertaining music.

I thank my dear Oxford and Cambridge friends who have always been there for me in the ups and downs of this long endeavour: Laura Bok, Glenn Lacki, Evert van Emde Boas, Kate Wilkinson, John-Paul Shepherd, Anouk Petersen, Luuk Huitink, Simon Perris, Sarah Alve, Ruth Shelton, Sam Cooper, Elizabeth Russell, Richard Sanford, Jo Kershaw, Hannah Perks and Kirsty Wayland. I thank Laura and Simon in particular for taking the time to proofread and comment on my final draft.

Finally, I thank David for everything.

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Texts and Editions

I use the following editions of the three source texts: Barrett (1964) and Halleran (1995) for Euripides, Fitch (2002) for Seneca, and Parish (1996) (French text with commentary) and Cairncross (1970) (translation and commentary) for Racine.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Prelude

I hate the idea of theatre just being an evening pastime. It should be emotionally and intellectually demanding. I love football. The level of analysis that you listen to on the terraces is astonishing. If people did that in the theatre ... but they don't. They expect to sit back and not participate. If there's a good place for new musicals, opera or whatever, then there should be a place for good new writing, irrespective of box office. (Sarah Kane)¹

Every single one of the five plays that Sarah Kane wrote in her short life was surrounded by controversy. Accusations of gratuitous violence, lack of structure, and lack of character development, which were levelled against her first play, *Blasted*, could apply as easily to Kane's second work, *Phaedra's Love*, which premiered at the Gate Theatre on 15 May 1996 as part of their 'New Playwrights, Ancient Sources' series.² Kane, who directed the performance herself, felt it important to 'try to do the violence as realistically as possible.' She recalled the first fully staged rehearsal as follows:

And the very first time when we did the final scene with all the blood and the false bowels by the end of it we were all severely traumatised. All the actors were standing there covered in blood having just raped and slit their throats; and then one of them said, 'this is the most disgusting play I've ever been in,' and he walked out. But because of the work we'd done

¹As quoted in Saunders (2002), 15.

²The other two plays on the bill were *The Invisible Woman*, by Paul Godfrey, and *Boccaccio's The Decameron*, adapted by Nick Ward.

before, all of us knew that point was reached because of a series of emotional journeys that had been made. So none of us felt it was unjustified, it was just completely unpleasant.³

Critics cringed at the experience of having violence enacted literally ‘in their faces,’ and ultimately decided that the attempt at realism simply did not work: ‘For a meagre production lasting barely an hour, the gore quota is remarkable. . . . But there is such a thing as Atrocity Fatigue, and it has unfortunately affected the cast quite as much as the spectators. The acts of brutality, which lack both conviction and any sense of timing, are all either tedious or laughable.’⁴

Kane’s Hippolytus is a narcissistic sex addict who cares about no one and nothing. He begins the play alone on stage glued to the television, and masturbating into a sock, all the time completely devoid of any emotion. He watches an incredibly violent film ‘impassively’ and ‘comes without a flicker of pleasure’ (Scene One, 65).⁵ In contrast to the lifeless Hippolytus, Phaedra’s passion for her stepson fills her with an intense burning, a fire that makes her feel alive. She says to her daughter Strophe, ‘There’s a thing between us, an awesome fucking thing, can you feel it? It burns. Meant to be. We were. Meant to be’ (Scene Three, 70). It is the tragic irony of the play that only through her dying act (accusing Hippolytus of raping her) does Phaedra paradoxically give Hippolytus the life he has been missing. The play ends with Hippolytus choosing to throw himself to the maddened crowd, who mutilate him (ripping off his genitals, pulling out his intestines) but give him a sense of vitality that he has been longing to feel. As the vultures descend on Hippolytus’ body, he smiles, says, ‘If there could have been more moments like this’, and dies.

Amidst the shock factor of the sex and violence of her adaptation, Kane’s *Phaedra’s Love* also raises some important questions about the nature of adaptation. The playbill subtitles the play as ‘Inspired by Seneca’s *Phaedra* and Euripides’ *Hippolytus*’ and begins with a quote from Euripides at the top of the page:

You will reap

³Kane interview with Nils Tibert, cited in Saunders (2002), 80.

⁴Hall (7 June 1996).

⁵Quotations taken from Kane (1996).

through the long cycle of time, a rich reward in
tears.
And when young girls sing songs, they will not
forget you,
your name will not be left unmentioned,
nor Phaedra's love for you remain unsung.⁶

Although this quotation would suggest that Kane got her title from Euripides, her own description of her source material paints a more complicated picture:

I read Euripides after I'd written *Phaedra's Love*. And I've never read Racine so far. Also, I only read Seneca once. I didn't want to get too much into it – I certainly didn't want to write a play that you couldn't understand unless you knew the original. I wanted it to stand completely on its own.⁷

The informed reader or audience member, however, could see much of all three sources in her version.

The phrases that Fitch uses to describe Seneca's plays in his introduction to the tragedies for the Loeb Classical Library could easily apply to Kane's own work. Seneca's tragedies create a 'world of extremes,'⁸ and 'a world of passion and moral chaos ... bleakly at variance with the determined optimism of his philosophical works.'⁹ Of the *Phaedra* in particular, Fitch notes that there is 'no evidence of either human or divine order in the world of this play.'¹⁰ And the image of Phaedra's passion as a flame that burns and consumes seems to come straight from Seneca.¹¹ Yet the structure of the play, its focus on Hippolytus at the start of the play and Phaedra's suicide off stage and in the middle of the play, echo the Euripidean version. And one review of a revival performance in 2005 at the Bristol Old Vic aptly highlights the Racine-like overtones of the play:

⁶This is a loose translation of Eur.*Hipp.*1425-1430.

⁷Kane interview with Nils Tabert, cited in Saunders (2002), 72.

⁸Fitch (2002), 10.

⁹Fitch (2002), 25.

¹⁰Fitch (2002), 444.

¹¹Kane's Phaedra as quoted above, plus 'Can't switch this off. Can't crush it. Can't. Wake up with it, burning me,' 'Loved you till it burnt them' (Scene Three), and [to Hippolytus] 'You burn me' (Scene Four), to which Hippolytus replies 'No one burns me' repeated twice, compared to Seneca's Phaedra *aut quis iuvare Daedalus flammis queat* (line 120), Nurse *nefanda casto pectore exturba ocus, | extingue flammis, neve te dirae spei | praebe obsequentem* (lines 130-132) and *compesce amoris impii flammis, precor* (line 165).

To my mind though, the palpable and pervasive claustrophobia and *ennui* of Theseus' court, the conflict between religiousness and atheism indicated in the 'priest scene,' as well as the concentration on Phaedra herself as a tragic figure caught between her uncontrollable passion and her role as Queen, would all seem to suggest some kinship with Racine's version as well as those by Seneca and Euripides.¹²

One might ask, do these allusions undermine Kane's ambition to make her version stand on its own? And how can we reconcile these sometimes overt connections to other source material with the playwright's own assertion that she was unaware of any other sources?

The Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition – the body of reception material based on Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Seneca's *Phaedra*, and/or Racine's *Phèdre* – provides a unique mechanism within which to explore such questions. This thesis will look at ways in which three source texts collectively have been reworked and reimagined in various reception traditions. Reception here is not a linear act, nor a chain that builds link by link over time – it is instead, perhaps, more helpful to look at the reception of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition as a porous membrane, containing a number of different items, connecting and interacting in a multi-dimensional, fluid way, manifesting itself in different shapes and forms depending on the political, social, historical or literary context in which this story of incest, passion, loyalty, suicide, filicide, and, ultimately, the irresistible power of love, has emerged since Racine himself reworked Euripides and Seneca in the late seventeenth century.

1.2 Source Texts

This thesis is the first comprehensive study of the three major Hippolytus and Phaedra source texts as a collective whole, challenging not only the idea of a single original 'source text', but also the idea of a directly linear reception pattern. Previous studies of the reception of these three plays have tended not only to discuss a single source in isolation, but have also been largely diachronic. This thesis examines how thematic

¹²'Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love*', <http://www.didaskalia.net/reviews/2006/2006_12_21_03.html>, first retrieved April 2014.

clusters within the source material relate to social factors, such as the consanguinity of the relationship between the two protagonists, trends in scholarship, such as queer theory or ecocriticism, and developments in intellectual history, such as psychoanalytical theory. In this section I will focus on thematic developments in the scholarship on Euripides, Seneca and Racine, to situate my own thematic analysis of the reception of the tradition in its scholarly context and to highlight how trends in the scholarship relate to trends in the tradition's reception.¹³

1.2.1 Euripides' *Hippolytus*

Several significant translations of Euripides at the turn of the 20th century, in particular Murray and Wilamowitz, made Euripides accessible to a wide readership for the first time in the modern world. A reading of the first half of Gilbert Murray's translation of the *Hippolytus* was witnessed by Bertrand Russell who was struck by Phaedra's troubled soul.¹⁴ A staging of that translation marked the beginning of Murray's collaboration with George Bernard Shaw, Granville-Barker, and the National Repertory Theatre in the early 20th century. Wilamowitz's translation had a similar impact in Germany.¹⁵ From this time, translation rather than interaction with the Greek original became the key medium of transmission for the Euripidean text. Even more significant in the case of Gilbert Murray is the early prejudice for the first, Phaedra-centric, half of the play.¹⁶

¹³See Appendix A.1 for a comparison of the basic plots of the texts analysed in this section.

¹⁴Monk (1996), 137.

¹⁵On the impact of Murray and Wilamowitz, see Michelini (1987), 17-18.

¹⁶The importance of Gilbert Murray as a translator of Euripides is noted in Ackerman (1986), who titles his article 'Euripides and Professor Murray' after a T.S. Eliot essay. Ackerman notes the importance of Murray's editions, translations and scholarship on his 'favourite Greek author' (Ackerman (1986), 330) in redeeming Euripides from the harsh criticism he faced in the 19th century, and still evident in the early scholarship of the 20th century. Spranger (1927), for example, begins his article, 'The meaning of the Hippolytus of Euripides', with a claim that he follows in the tradition 'founded at Cambridge and continued here at Manchester ... tending to displace the contempt for Euripides that had been broadcast by Schlegel and his followers in the last century, and to replace it by admiration founded on the rationalist interpretation of his plays' (Spranger (1927), 18). It is perhaps also worth noting here that A. W. Schlegel had quite a sympathetic view of the *Hippolytus* in particular. He criticized Racine for focussing too much on the characterization of Phaedra and too little on Hippolytus and his 'austere purity of a virginal soul.' Of the final reconciliation scene at the end of the play, where Artemis resolves the conflict between Theseus and his son, Schlegel commented, 'I know of nothing at all, either in ancient or in modern tragedy, that is more touching'; and he translated the whole scene into French in his *Comparaison entre la Phèdre de Racine et celle d'Euripide* of 1807

Euripides' *Hippolytus* is a play of two halves and of two protagonists. Rarely in Greek tragedy do two (one could even argue three if Theseus is included) characters so evenly divide the number of lines between them.¹⁷ The first half of the play (lines 1-775) is dominated by Phaedra, focusing on her struggle against Aphrodite's passion and ending with her suicide. Hippolytus, and his attempt to defend his reputation and way of life against Phaedra's false accusation of rape, dominates the second half of the play (lines 776-1466). The scholarship on the ancient Greek play focusses on the following major themes, which I discuss in turn below: Phaedra's culpability ('thinking' versus 'doing' evil) including the importance of key words such as 'pure' (*agnos*), 'shame' (*aidos*), and 'passion' (*eros*), and 'speech' versus 'silence'. Here I also explore Hippolytus' relationship with his father Theseus, which has resonances with Euripides' *Bacchae* and Euripides' other Hippolytus play, areas of focus that are also regularly represented in the scholarship on the play.

Hippolytus I

There has been much debate about the content of Euripides' other Hippolytus play, written before the extant version,¹⁸ with, as far as we can tell from the fragments and ancient commentary, very different content. For purposes of this discussion, I will refer to the lost *Hippolytus* as *Hippolytus I* and the extant version as *Hippolytus*.

The two main commentaries (Halleran (1995) and Barrett (1964)) accept the extant *Hippolytus* as a re-writing of a previous version, a version which they also agree presented a very different portrayal of Phaedra – a Phaedra intent on adultery. Euripides'

(Behler (1986), 363-365). Flygt (1934) in his 'Treatment of character in Euripides and Seneca: the Hippolytus' rates Euripides below Aeschylus and Sophocles, although prefers Euripides to Seneca.

¹⁷In terms of number of lines spoken, Hippolytus has 271, Phaedra and Theseus each 187, and the Nurse a surprising 216; compare this to Euripides' *Medea*, a play of similar length, but where the title character speaks 562 lines (Knox (1952), 3-4).

¹⁸Halleran claims that this is the only certain instance of an Athenian playwright rewriting a play (Halleran (1995), 24). The issue of whether or not the extant play represents a rewriting of an earlier original has more recently been contested by Hutchinson (2004) and Gibert (1997). Hutchinson cites a papyrus hypothesis for the missing play suggesting that the plots of the two Hippolytus plays were quite remarkably different and thus argues that the extant *Hippolytus* was not necessarily a reworking of the non-extant *Hippolytus*, but could have simply been a different story about the same or similar cast of characters (such as, for example, Sophocles' two Oedipus plays) (Hutchinson (2004), 26-28). Gibert calls the statement in the extant play's hypothesis, indicating a second play of earlier date, 'almost certainly a mere guess' (Gibert (1997), 86).

Phaedra is described as such in an ancient Life of Euripides and Aristophanes' *Frogs*, and Halleran suggests that this cannot be the 'virtuous and discreet' Phaedra of the extant version.¹⁹ Given this presumed characterisation of Phaedra, it is impossible to ignore the Senecan version – with a much more complicated Phaedra character, as I will discuss below – in any attempts to reconstruct the plot of *Hippolytus I*. Although Halleran (1995) cites several German scholars who give Seneca a prominent role in reconstructing *Hippolytus I*,²⁰ most scholars are, quite rightly in my opinion, very wary in doing so. Halleran himself expresses 'serious doubts' about this German approach, but does suspect that Seneca follows *Hippolytus I* in many 'broad outlines.'²¹

What do we know of the plot of *Hippolytus I*? Several fragments (434, 435, and 436) seem to indicate a direct confrontation between Phaedra and Hippolytus, and there was also a scene where a shocked Hippolytus (presumably as a result of Phaedra's revelation of her passion) covered himself with his cloak in shame, thus leading to the extended title *Hippolytus Katakalyptomēnos*.²² Barrett provides lengthy speculation²³ on the content of both *Hippolytus I* and a *Phaedra* written by Sophocles. The main text of Barrett's introduction also includes summary notes on the missing plays. Barrett described *Hippolytus I* as representing the 'traditional legend' with one modification: Phaedra is a 'shameless and unprincipled woman' who attempts to seduce Hippolytus. When rebuffed in 'anger and self-defense' she accuses him of (attempted) rape to Theseus. Theseus curses Hippolytus who is killed by the bull. Phaedra's 'treachery' is exposed and she kills herself at the end of the play. The principal character was likely to have been Hippolytus, as in the extant version, although the fragments tell us very little about his characterisation, except his chastity. It is likely that Phaedra made an approach to Hippolytus on stage and that he reacted by veiling his face in horror (hence the title, as above). Barrett also surmises that Phaedra's charge of rape may have included faked evidence of violence (as appear in Seneca's *Phaedra*) and that The-

¹⁹Halleran (1995), 25.

²⁰Halleran (1995), 25.

²¹Halleran (1995), 26.

²²Halleran (1995), 26-7.

²³Barrett (1964), 15-45

seus does not curse Hippolytus until the end of their *agon* with certainty (in contrast to the extant version) that his curse will be fulfilled, it being the third of Neptune's three promised curses. We cannot be sure how the truth of the situation is revealed, but there is evidence that Phaedra killed herself at the end. The play is also assumed to have ended with a *deus ex machina* and a prophecy of a future cult in Hippolytus' honour.²⁴

We have very little evidence of the plot of Sophocles' *Phaedra*, but Barrett does make a few observations about its content. Based on the title he assumes the play was concerned mainly with the fate of Phaedra, not Hippolytus and thus he credits her with the 'virtue necessary for tragic stature'. The scene is likely Athens, as setting the play in Troezen seems to have been an innovation in Euripides' extant *Hippolytus*. The most concrete piece of information we do have is that Theseus was away in Hades, believed dead (the situation also in Seneca's *Phaedra*). Theseus' presumed death would therefore make Phaedra's love not adulterous. At the end of the play Phaedra killed herself not on discovery, but after a confession and in remorse for her actions leading to Hippolytus' death. We have even less information on Hippolytus, and Barrett assumes he took no part in the action after rejecting Phaedra's advances.²⁵ These speculations seem to me more matters of opinion than based on any hard evidence, and Barrett does admit as much several times during his analysis – we simply don't have sufficient evidence as to what Sophocles' *Phaedra* was like.

From early on in 20th-century scholarship, speculation on the *Hippolytus I* features in the discussion of the extant play, particularly when discussing the characterisation of Phaedra. Lengthy speculation is provided in, for example, Spranger (1927). Most scholars assume the extant version to be a less racy revision of the unpopular original.²⁶ Seneca is also often used as evidence of Euripides' lost play.²⁷ For other accounts, see Kiso (1973), who focusses on the relationship between Sophocles' lost *Phaedra* and the *Hippolytus I*, Ley (1987), who considers the chronological order of Euripides and

²⁴Barrett (1964), 11.

²⁵Barrett (1964), 12-13.

²⁶Cf. Tierney (1937), which also includes speculation on the content of Sophocles' lost *Phaedra*.

²⁷Cf. Osho (1970).

Sophocles' *Hippolytus*/Phaedra plays, and, finally the commentaries of Halleran (1995) and Barrett (1964), which include detailed analysis of fragment material. Roisman (1999), in her first chapter, 'The Old Phaedra' also considers the *Hippolytus I* in her analysis of the overall Greek treatment of the myth, to understand better what the surviving play would have meant to its contemporary audience. The issue of whether or not the extant play represents a re-writing of an earlier original has recently been contested by Gibert (1997) and Hutchinson (2004).²⁸

Phaedra's 'claim to shame'

Phaedra's culpability for her desire (*eros*), what I term her 'claim to shame (*aidos*)' is expressed in the famous speech of lines 373-430 of the extant *Hippolytus*, her longest utterance in the play, and where she makes her defence. Discussion of this speech is a persistent trend in the scholarship, beginning with the seminal article by Dodds (1925). Dodds centres his analysis around the word αἰδώς, particularly with regard to Phaedra and her relationship to Hippolytus (and his claim to σωφροσύνη). His article concludes with the following assessment of the play as a whole:

As Phaedra does violence to αἰδώς in the name of αἰδώς, so does Hippolytus to σωφροσύνη in the name of σωφροσύνη: each is the victim of his own and the other's submerged desires masquerading as morality. Complementary and interdependent, these are the two determining moments on which all the rest of the action hangs: here, to my mind, lies the unity, structural and intellectual, of the *Hippolytus*. In the formal aspect, it is a representation of the interplay of two personalities, both of them 'nobler than we, but marred by some ἁμαρτία', in conception, it is a study of the effects of conflict and repression in the sphere of sex.²⁹

Aidos is crucial to Phaedra's battle against her passion, and numerous scholars have noted the difficulty of translating this particular Greek word into English. Halleran (1995) defines it as follows:

²⁸Roisman also takes this view, stating: 'This book will question both the reading of the second *Hippolytus* as correcting the first play and the usual reading of the second Phaedra and Hippolytus as chaste. It suggests that Euripides' defeat at the Dionysian Festival may have led him to make certain changes in the way Phaedra and Hippolytus presented themselves, but did not lead him to reshape radically their personalities or motives. Rather than leading him to toady to popular taste, it may have made him sarcastic, acerbic, and contemptuous of it' (Roisman (1999), 9).

²⁹Dodds (1925), 103-4.

Aidos, prominent in the play, refers to a complex set of emotions which include the feeling that inhibits one from improper action.... In part, it keeps one from conduct that would jeopardize one's good name. It is also what one feels having committed such action; thus it suggests "shame" as well as "reverence, respect".³⁰

Douglas Cairns further notes the importance of this concept to the *Hippolytus* in particular:

It is in the *Hippolytus* that *aidos*, as a considerable element in the motivation of both central characters, plays its most celebrated Euripidean role. The concept does work in different ways in the play, but its overall prominence is surely to be attributed to the poet's focusing on the power of Aphrodite; the aspect of *aidos* which renders it most relevant to the main theme of the play, then is that of its association with sexuality and the social roles of men and women.³¹

The underlying sexual connotation has particular resonance in Phaedra's famous speech, and throughout the play as a whole, as Euripides contrasts the concepts of *aidos* and of *eros*, the evil desire that Phaedra is fighting against.³²

The question of Phaedra's particular type of *aidos* has also sparked much scholarly debate, particularly around whether or not she divides *aidos* into two kinds (the argument hinges on what the adjective $\delta\iota\sigma\sigma\alpha\iota$ modifies in line 385³³). I am persuaded by the idea that there are two kinds of *aidos*, one of which is more appropriate to Phaedra, who is consumed by *eros*, yet still desperate to retain at least some sense of *aidos*. Williams supports the argument that $\delta\iota\sigma\sigma\alpha\iota$ must apply to $\alpha\iota\delta\acute{\omega}\varsigma$, and finds further support in lines 386-7 for the consolidation of the 'two' under the same letters:

In the supposed circumstances, in which it would always be clear how we should react, there would not be two things to have this one name, " $\alpha\iota\delta\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ ". The line does not mean, as is generally supposed, that there would be one more name; it means that there would be one less thing. The thought is, "If we could always see clearly the appropriate way to act from these kinds of motivations, there would not be these two things – good and bad $\alpha\iota\delta\acute{\omega}\varsigma$,

³⁰Halleran (1995), 44.

³¹Cairns (1993), 314.

³²The opposition between *aidos* and *eros* is also noted by Craik (1993), very much a response to Dodds (1925) also focussing on Phaedra's speech.

³³On which see Halleran (1995), 183 and Barrett (1964), 227-231

self respect and mere embarrassment or social conformity – that, as things are, bear this one name”.³⁴

This interpretation of these controversial lines captures the sense of *aidos* in contrast to the *eros* by which Phaedra is consumed,³⁵ and relates to the dilemma Phaedra faces between ‘thinking’ and ‘doing’ evil.³⁶

Phaedra’s characterisation in Euripides, emphasised in her famous speech and epitomised by the complex predicament in which Aphrodite’s prologue has placed the queen by giving her an illicit *eros* to resist, also represents a more general trend in the scholarship. Grene (1939) claims to be the first to argue that Phaedra, not Hippolytus, is the main character of the drama.³⁷ A more favourable interpretation of the characterisation of Phaedra is presented by Claus (1972), who argues that lines 375-390 are not Phaedra’s admission that her inability to control her desire for Hippolytus is due to flaws in her character, but rather emphasise that her moral success is dependent on preserving her good name. This is countered most recently by Roisman (1999) in her fourth chapter, ‘The Meaning of Words’, where Phaedra’s ‘confession’ speech is recast as a calculated manipulation of both the Chorus, calling on them as women to understand and appreciate what Roisman terms her *via dolorosa*, and the Nurse, to trick her into approaching Hippolytus on Phaedra’s behalf.³⁸

The first feminist reading of the play that I am aware of is presented in Rabinowitz (1986), which argues that the *Hippolytus* empowers men and reaffirms their authority

³⁴Williams (2008), 229. For a counter-argument, see Kovacs (1980), another response to Dodds (1925), who argues ‘there is only one kind of *aidos*, a quality of self-restraint or respect before the claims of others, a concern with measuring up to accepted standards in their eyes’ (Kovacs (1980), 296).

³⁵*Eros* has virtually the same emphatic position as *aidos* a few lines later: ἐπεὶ μὲν ἔρως ἔτρωσεν, ἐσχόπουν ὅπως κάλλιστ’ ἐνέγκαιμ’ αὐτόν, lines 392-3. Note also Phaedra’s reasoned approach with the verb ‘to consider’. Here also her passion is referred to as an illness (νόσον in line 394).

³⁶On the two kinds of *aidos*, see also Segal (1970), 283-288.

³⁷Grene also has much to say on the characterisation of Hippolytus. He reacts against early Humanist readings of the play, which argue that Hippolytus, in his aversion to sex, is denying his true nature (e.g. Linforth (1914)). Grene compares the conflict between austere chastity and natural desires in the *Hippolytus* to the story of Bellerephon and the Joseph tale in the Old Testament. Despite arguments such as this one, Hippolytus’ behaviour still troubled many scholars, such as Lucas (1946), who, in addition to emphatically rejecting an Orphic interpretation of Hippolytus’ chastity, emphasises Hippolytus’ strangeness and abnormality in the Greek context. For more on characterisation of Hippolytus, see §1.2.1 below.

³⁸Roisman (1999), 75-107. For more on Roisman’s arguments, particularly in relation to the speech versus silence theme, see §1.2.1 below.

by celebrating relations between them and objectifying women. This view is further developed in Rabinowitz (1993), a feminist reading of several Euripidean plays. On the *Hippolytus*, she comments:

The antithesis chastity/sexuality, played out against a grid of male/female, is not symmetrical but hierarchical; the female emerges as carnal,³⁹ her language and activity curtailed. I shall argue that when Artemis promises Hippolytos a marriage ritual in his honor, we have the representation of an institution that will reproduce these asymmetries, mystified but not eliminated. Significantly, the resolution realized on stage takes place between men, father and son, and it is made possible through the control of Phaedra's sexuality and speech.⁴⁰

And in particular on the characterisation of Phaedra:

Evaluation of characters is always problematic, but it is particularly important to attempt it in this case, because concern for her reputation was Phaedra's prime motivation for her actions. The play is set up so that the audience cannot offer the praise Phaedra so badly desires. We may understand her passion for revenge, but we are not intended to admire it. As woman and character, Phaedra is destroyed by speech and writing; she loses her honor and her moral superiority to Hippolytus. Artemis reserves the crucial word *eukleia* for Hippolytus (1299), whereas Phaedra is merely excused as the goddess' victim and granted a kind of nobility (*tropon tina gennaioteta*, 1300-1301) – only a qualified nobility because, out of her fear of being questioned, she has written lies (1310-11). The most noble course for Phaedra would have been to die without having spoken, but then where would the *kleos* (fame) of *eukleia* come from?⁴¹

Rabinowitz sums up her feminist interpretation as follows: 'The trick for the feminist reader, then, is to problematize the assumptions, revealing the potential female strength, even if it is not left standing at the play's conclusion.'⁴²

The significant body of material on Phaedra's response to her goddess-inflicted passion is important grounding for what I term Phaedra-centric adaptations of the tradition, which are the focus of Chapter 5. These adaptations tend toward a largely sympathetic view of Phaedra's character and the way in which she clings to at least a

³⁹We shall see how this kind of animalistic reading of Phaedra's passion comes out in, for example, the adaptations of Robinson Jeffers in §4.2.1.

⁴⁰Rabinowitz (1993), 156.

⁴¹Rabinowitz (1993), 165.

⁴²Rabinowitz (1993), 169. Another feminist reading of the play is also found in Goff (1990), chapters 1-2.

sense of *aidos* or shame, even if the full realisation of it is no longer available to her. It is of note that a significant proportion of the scholarship on the Euripidean play focuses chiefly on the female protagonist, even though Phaedra is only present in the first half of the play.⁴³

‘Speech’ versus ‘Silence’

Much of Euripides’ *Hippolytus* revolves around the characters’ decisions to speak or be silent and the devastating consequences this can have (e.g. the Nurse’s revelation of Phaedra’s love to Hippolytus and Theseus’ quickness to curse his son when he finds Phaedra’s lying tablet, or Hippolytus’ oath to keep silent on the Nurse’s revelation, which leaves him unable to convince Theseus of his innocence). This theme of ‘speech’ versus ‘silence’ is one of the most important and pervasively discussed in the scholarship on Euripides’ play.⁴⁴

The first and arguably most important and influential of the articles to address this theme is Knox (1952), who casts aside the search for a ‘primary character’ and reframes the analysis of the drama as follows:

The search for a central tragic figure in this play is a blind alley. When the action is so equitably divided between four characters, the unity of the work cannot depend on any one, but must lie in the nature of the relationship between all four. In the *Hippolytus* the significant relationship between the characters is the situation in which they are placed. It is exactly the same situation for all of them, one which imposes a choice between the same alternatives, silence and speech.⁴⁵

As Knox is quick to point out, the drama is significantly shaped by the prologue, where Aphrodite reveals the basic shape of the plot to the audience. As Knox states, ‘in no other Greek tragedy is the predetermination of human action by an external power made so emphatically clear ... [Aphrodite’s speech] is a complete explanation and one

⁴³Other articles on Phaedra’s characterisation include: Frischer (1970) (on how the polarisation of the Phaedra and Hippolytus characters is mirrored by the polarisation between the two goddesses), Solmsen (1973) (on ‘bad shame’ in Phaedra’s speech), Reckford (1974) (on Phaedra’s Cretan background, for more on which see §1.2.2 on Seneca’s *Phaedra*). For another particular discussion of Phaedra’s speech, see Kawashima (1978) (on Phaedra and αἰδώς, a response to Dodds (1925)).

⁴⁴See Michelini (1987), 279-80, on the importance of the speech versus silence theme in her discussion of trends in scholarship on the *Hippolytus*.

⁴⁵Knox (1952), 4.

which we are bound to accept.⁴⁶ However, while we know (better than the characters on the stage) *what* is going to happen, Aphrodite does not give us the precise details of *how*, and so the drama unfolds only partially ‘revealed’ beforehand. Knox, in another one of his typically emphatic statements, states that ‘in no other Greek tragedy do so many people change their minds about so many important matters . . . in the *Hippolytus* the line of development of the characters’ purposes is a zigzag.’⁴⁷ Aphrodite’s opening revelation does not, therefore, prevent other speech acts (or equally crucial moments of not speaking) from shaping the drama.

One aspect of the ‘speech’ versus ‘silence’ theme that Knox does not discuss is the scene in which Phaedra overhears⁴⁸ the Nurse’s conversation with Hippolytus. The entire scene is littered with references to speech versus silence,⁴⁹ and is of crucial importance to later versions of the play and to its reception. The staging here has been much debated in subsequent scholarship.⁵⁰ It is very important to the drama that Phaedra does exit, thus preventing Phaedra and Hippolytus from ever sharing the stage. This heightens sympathy for both characters, as they constantly rely on others speaking for them. We will also see in §1.2.2 and §1.2.3 below that the meeting of the two protagonists is one of the most significant changes the two later dramatists make to the ancient Greek, with significant consequences for the dramatic action and Phaedra’s role in it.

⁴⁶Knox (1952), 4.

⁴⁷Knox (1952), 5.

⁴⁸This ‘eavesdropping at the door’ scene is unparalleled in tragedy and much debated in later scholarship (Halleran (1995), 198).

⁴⁹Phaedra first requires silence so that she can hear what is being said inside (σιγήσαι, line 565); the chorus agrees (σιγῶ, line 568) but, when Phaedra reacts badly, demand to know what has been said in short emphatic questions (τίνα θροεῖς αὐδάν; τίνα βοῶις λόγον; | ἔνεπε, τίς φοβεῖ σε φήμα, γύναι, | φρένας ἐπίσσυτος; lines 571-3); and Phaedra blames speech directly for her destruction (ἀπώλεσέν μ’ εἰποῦσα συμφορὰς ἐμάς, line 596). Hippolytus also continues the use of speech and silence words when he arrives on stage: οἶων λόγων ἄρρητον εἰσήκουσ’ ὅπα (line 602) and οὐκ ἔστ’ ἀκούσας δεῖν’ ὅπως σιγήσομαι (line 604), as well as speech words at lines 608 (εἴρηκας) and 610 (λέγειν). The Nurse attempts supplication to get him to be quiet (in addition to her command σίγησον, ὦ παῖ, πρὶν τιν’ αἰσθῆσθαι βοῆς at line 603), but is unsuccessful. This is, of course, irrelevant as she has already secured an oath of silence from Hippolytus in their conversation offstage, as we find out at lines 611-12: ὦ τέκνον, ὅρκους μηδαμῶς ἀτιμάσης. | ἡ γλῶσσ’ ὁμώμοχ’, ἡ δὲ φρήν ἀνώμοτος. Line 612 leaves some doubt as to whether Hippolytus will indeed keep silent, but he affirms that he will stick to his oath at line 660: σιγᾷ δ’ ἔξομεν στόμα.

⁵⁰For a summary of the arguments, see Halleran (1995), 200-1. Barrett also has Phaedra remain on stage ‘cowering somewhere at the side’ (Barrett (1964), 272).

I also take issue with Knox's harsh indictment of Phaedra's accusation of rape, which he outlines as follows: 'Hippolytus is a witness to her weakness, and he must be silenced. To this motive for action against him is added the hatred of the rejected woman who has heard every word of his ugly speech.'⁵¹ Here Knox not only assumes a staging that is far from universally accepted, but also oversimplifies the issue. It is unfair and inaccurate to assume that Phaedra is acting entirely in anger. Although it is true that Phaedra's dying action – writing the tablet – will be the catalyst that leads to Hippolytus' ruin, I do not think it fair to condemn her for this action. She shows consistent concern for both her children and her husband (e.g. lines 419-425) throughout the play, so cannot be acting entirely in her own interest. Although she is ultimately unable to keep her passion secret, this failure is due to persuasive rhetoric and supplication on the part of the Nurse, as she takes advantage of Phaedra's weakened state to persuade her to turn from her preferred course of action. The final choral ode of the play also serves to emphasise the power of *Eros* (the god's power over ἄνδρος in particular is emphasised at lines 1276-80), perhaps serving to remind us, before we accept Artemis' judgment, of what exactly Phaedra was fighting against. We will see the increasing complexity behind Phaedra's desire and how she acts upon it first in Seneca and then in Racine (I would argue that jealousy and rejection are sentiments only added to Phaedra's characterisation in Racine's version of the myth), and subsequently throughout the modern reception of the tradition.

The speech versus silence theme cannot be discussed in isolation; building upon the foundation of Knox (1952), this theme became pervasive in the overall scholarship on the play. Skloot (1969) in his short article draws together points from Knox (1952) and Arrowsmith (1968) to expand the speech and silence theme to include 'the failure of sight as well as the failure of language.'⁵² Skloot continues, '[Euripides] consistently shows how, in an ugly, disintegrating world, neither human sight nor human speech makes any contribution to the furthering of understanding among men, or among men and gods,' and provides as examples Phaedra's veiled entrance, the eavesdropping scene

⁵¹Knox (1952), 14 and note 15 on the staging.

⁵²Skloot (1969), 226.

I have discussed above where Phaedra, he argues, overhears the Nurse and Hippolytus, Hippolytus' inability to see Artemis (line 86) and the goddess looking away as Hippolytus dies.⁵³ While the language used is at times overly personalised and unsubstantiated,⁵⁴ Skloot's reading of the speech versus silence theme does provide some noteworthy parallels to the modern theatre, which are worth bearing in mind for further discussion of the reception of the play:

We remember that the first attack made by the absurdists (and the surrealists before them) was on language, on its futile and ridiculous attempt to convey meaning or feeling. Ionesco's *The bald soprano* comes immediately to mind as the most prominent (and intentionally less artistic) expression of a world where silence and speech are hopelessly confused and drained of value. Further, the use of sound and silence as a metaphor for man's gaining an understanding of himself in an unfriendly universe strikes a particularly modern chord as fears increase about life's being governed by capricious whims of external powers or destroyed by the deafening, meaningless roar of the machine.⁵⁵

Here we see some of the scholarly grounding for adaptations such as Brian Friel's *Living Quarters* (1977), a metatheatrical drama where the characters relive events that have already happened and they are powerless to stop, while at the same time maintaining hope that they can somehow alter the past; the entire drama is orchestrated by a seemingly omniscient, God-like narrator called Sir who (at least attempts) to outline and control the events of the play.⁵⁶

Roisman (1999) represents the most recent and comprehensive analysis of the play via the speech versus silence theme, what she terms the tragedy of the implicit.⁵⁷ I

⁵³Skloot (1969), 226.

⁵⁴See, for example, his statement that Euripides 'uses the theatre to work against itself as a means of expressing his torment in being the recorder of a sick society', and continues, '[Euripides] recommends himself to followers of the theatre of the absurd, and impresses Arrowsmith (and me) as being the most modern of the great classic tragedians' (Skloot (1969), 227).

⁵⁵Skloot (1969), 227.

⁵⁶For further discussion of this adaption see §6.4.

⁵⁷Other articles of note on the speech versus silence theme in the play include Avery (1968) (who focusses specifically on the famous line 612 to analyse why this line on oath breaking was so famous, particularly in ancient comedy, and also to argue that the line is emblematic of the dualism between inner truth and outward appearances), Segal (1972) (on curses and oaths), Fitzgerald (1973) (more specifically on truth and lies, and how this relates to the role of the goddesses, who are also shown to be mistaken, and thus irrelevant to human affairs), Musurillo (1974) (also reframing the theme into a discussion on truth and lies), Luschnig (1983) (focusing on ignorance), Segal (1992) (a structuralist reading, arguing that language functions as a model for broader patterns of significance and

want to focus here on her main point, which reconfigures the speech versus silence theme to argue that language is used as a tool for manipulation in the play. Roisman reinterprets Phaedra's initial speech act, where she speaks in delirium to her Nurse, as a deliberate fabrication designed to entice the Nurse to act for her, allowing her to retain her good reputation:

My argument here is that Phaedra is not overtaken by her passion but rather in full control of herself, displaying the very determination that the Chorus had described as characteristic of women. That is, she is neither delirious nor trying to hide her love for Hippolytus, as most scholars assume. Rather, Phaedra here makes a deliberate effort to reveal that love to the Nurse in order to enlist the latter's help in attaining the man of her desire. Only it is important that the revelation should look as though it comes against her will. . . . Only in that way can she maintain the appearance of a virtuous woman doing everything in her power to resist what is ultimately an irresistible passion. Only in this way will she be able to get the Nurse to act as her go-between.⁵⁸

As I discussed in the previous section on Phaedra's 'claim to shame', I do not fully agree with Roisman's reinterpretation of Phaedra's speech acts in the Euripides play, which Roisman sees as calculated deception, using descriptors such as 'dropping hints'⁵⁹, 'teasing'⁶⁰, 'devised rhetorically'⁶¹, 'artful staging' and 'successful manipulation' of lesser characters such as the Nurse and Chorus.⁶² Her analysis seems to me heavily influenced by the Senecan and Racinian versions of the play and I will discuss how this assessment might better apply to the Phaedra characters in these two plays, perhaps more so in Seneca, in §1.2.2 and §1.2.3 below. Roisman, however, does conclude her Chapter 3 on Phaedra and the Nurse, significantly in my view, with mention of the 'mythic' characterisation of Phaedra 'as a woman who is ready to violate her marriage and make her desire for her stepson known.'⁶³ I agree that there is a kind of mythic characterisation of Phaedra, much as Roisman suggests, but I do not think that this

especially for the danger of the dissolution of structures of meaning – personal, social, religious, and metaphysical), and Minadeo (1994) (who uses the speech versus silence theme to explore the ethics of the play).

⁵⁸Roisman (1999), 50.

⁵⁹Roisman (1999), 51.

⁶⁰Roisman (1999), 60.

⁶¹Roisman (1999), 60.

⁶²Roisman (1999), 66.

⁶³Roisman (1999), 68.

is the Phaedra of Euripides' extant *Hippolytus*, but instead the Phaedra that emerges from a tradition which includes both Euripides' two versions, as well as Seneca and Racine's arguably more complex, if not harsher, portrayals of the love-struck queen, and subsequent adaptations that continue to develop the queen's characterisation across various social, cultural, and even political contexts.⁶⁴

Hippolytus' purity or perversion

Any discussion of Hippolytus' characterisation in Euripides' *Hippolytus* centres around one of two key aspects: first, his aversion to sex and what this means about his sexuality and his reaction to the revelation of Phaedra's love, and secondly his relationship with his father, which dominates the dramatic action in the second, Hippolytus-centric, half of the play. Euripides' Hippolytus places particular emphasis on his innate virtue and goodness (including, within that, purity in all senses of the term, including sexual – the important word *agnos* will come up later in my discussion). This comes across as arrogant at times, particularly as interpreted by his father in their famous *agon*, but he does, at least in the Greek text, seem genuine, for example in his dying moments where he shows real tenderness toward his father (στένω σε μᾶλλον ἢ ἢ μὲ τῆς ἁμαρτίας, line 1409).⁶⁵ Early scholarship would not agree, as exemplified in Riddehough (1946), who begins his article on the *Hippolytus* by stating that 'of all the heroes of Greek tragedy, it is safe to say that Euripides' Hippolytus has had the very least sympathy from modern critics.'⁶⁶ Early scholars indeed found few redeeming features in the hero's character, seeing him as vain and self-centred, and it is arguably Riddehough himself who first acknowledged the ascetic qualities of Hippolytus' character, and the

⁶⁴Interestingly, Roisman exonerates the Nurse in her portrayal of Phaedra as the calculated manipulator: 'the Nurse's response shows her to be genuinely distraught by the revelation to which Phaedra has brought her. It shows her to be protective of her mistress's honor and concerned for her well-being. The audience cannot miss the fact that this visible distress was brought on by Phaedra's calculated and exploitative manoeuvres. The Nurse's deep loyalty and concern are sharply contrasted with Phaedra's lack of those qualities' (Roisman (1999), 66). This paragraph is interesting to compare to Racine, where the tables are turned completely and the Nurse, not Phaedra, is cast as the one with 'exploitative manoeuvres'.

⁶⁵Hippolytus' death – and the poignant reconciliation between father and son that happens in the final lines of the play – is a very rare example of death on stage in Greek drama.

⁶⁶Riddehough (1946), 438.

lack of understanding between the protagonists that underpins the dramatic action of Euripides' play. In recent times, however, the complex nature of Hippolytus' character has been more comprehensively acknowledged.

It is no surprise given the emphasis on Hippolytus' purity and aversion to sex in the play itself that from 1970 onwards a number of psychoanalytical readings, focussing on Hippolytus' characterisation in particular,⁶⁷ begin to emerge in the scholarship.⁶⁸ Psychoanalytical readings of the play begin with Rankin (1974),⁶⁹ who casts Hippolytus as a Freudian 'psychopathological hero' and argues that his repressed sexuality expresses itself in the form of an emphasis on chastity and of extreme misogyny. She also interprets Artemis as a mother-surrogate, allowing Hippolytus to achieve reunion with his mother without any shame at his illegitimacy.⁷⁰ Regarding the hero's illegitimacy, Rankin argues, Hippolytus has 'felt himself tainted by the nature of his conception. He has reacted by an aversion against the sexual violence of his father and has resolved that his way of life will be manifestly irreproachable, surpassing in chastity and nobility that of any legitimate child.'⁷¹ Artemis, as chief goddess of the Amazons is a perfect mother-substitute for Hippolytus' absent Amazon mother, yet 'for all his unique intimacy with her, her face is as withdrawn from him as the unknown face of his mother.'⁷²

⁶⁷With one noteworthy exception: Phaedra's fantasies are given a psychoanalytic reading in Glenn (1976), who notes the various erotic associations in her wishes in lines 208-231 and sees them as demonstration of what he calls Euripides' 'astonishing' awareness of Freudian psychopathology.

⁶⁸While it is certainly not surprising that a number of psychoanalytical readings focussing on Hippolytus' characterisation can be found in the current body of scholarship, what is interesting is that these readings are predated by psychoanalytical readings in the reception of the play, most notably Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* of 1924 and H.D.'s *Hippolytus Temporizes* of 1927. I will discuss these adaptations, and the influence of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis on the authors and their work, in detail in Chapter 3. One notable exception to this trend is Dodds (1925), contemporaneous to O'Neill and H.D. and cited in Rankin (1974), who notes the psychological aspect of Phaedra's repressed desire for Hippolytus as follows: 'Euripides did not need a Freud to tell him that the expelled 'complex' lives on, vainly seeking in symbolic acts the satisfaction denied it in literal reality, and sometimes destroying in the process the personality which has expelled it' (Dodds (1925), 102). Dodds (1951) also applies psychoanalytical readings to a variety of ancient Greek texts in his *The Greeks and the Irrational*, although not to Hippolytus and Phaedra in particular. See especially the chapter on Dream-Pattern and Culture-Pattern.

⁶⁹An earlier version of this article was published in 1968, which is why I consider this article before, e.g. Segal (1970).

⁷⁰On this particular motif in the reception of the play, see H.D.'s *Hippolytus Temporizes* of 1927 (§3.3), where Artemis has an enhanced role and is referred to multiple times by Hippolytus as 'Mother'.

⁷¹Rankin (1974), 76.

⁷²Rankin (1974), 78.

Hippolytus' extreme misogyny is also interpreted by Rankin as indicative of his repressed sexuality: 'We may suppose that one unconscious motive of his misogyny is that it serves as a safety device whereby he projects onto women his own repressed sexual impulses; his unconscious denial takes the form "I do not feel sexual desire for women; it is women who cannot control their impulses".'⁷³ Hippolytus' obsession with sexual purity can, Rankin argues, be closely connected to his hatred of women. According to Rankin, Hippolytus divides women into two groups: 'the first, a very small one, consisting of his mother and his mother-surrogate, is distinguished by its chastity; the second is the rest of womankind whom he constantly censures for sexual impurity.'⁷⁴ No other woman can live up to the standard of perfection set by the virginity of Artemis, his ideal woman/mother – no wonder Phaedra's proposition is such a shock to him! It is what Rankin terms the 'incest barrier,'⁷⁵ in reference to Hippolytus' repressed sexual attraction to his absent mother and mother-surrogate, that makes Phaedra's proposition so horrific: 'It was the tragic plot of Hippolytus to be confronted with the precise situation likely to breach the defenses he had erected in his conscious behaviour against his repressed and unconscious desire for union with his mother. He was offered the temptation to supplant his father and become the lover of his stepmother, his father's mate, and so identifiable with his mother.'⁷⁶ These psychoanalytical readings emphasise important themes regarding conflict between father and son that are picked up the adaptations that form the basis of Chapter 3.

The language of the play, and related sexual imagery, have also been discussed at length. Micheline (1987) provides a summary of the issues as follows:

Hippolytos has impressed critics as being 'richer' in language play than other work by Euripides and thus as being more receptive to literary analysis based on imagery. . . . The chains of imagery in the play, associated with nets and hunting, meadows and water, and the themes of the golden age, were traced by Charles Segal and others.⁷⁷ Certain passages were sensed

⁷³Rankin (1974), 77.

⁷⁴Rankin (1974), 79.

⁷⁵Rankin (1974), 81.

⁷⁶Rankin (1974), 87. Rankin does not find it necessary to question whether or not Hippolytus' relationship with his stepmother would be considered incestuous, although the consanguinity of the relationship was an important factor in the early reception of the myth, as I will discuss in Chapter 2.

⁷⁷Micheline cites the following articles on this theme: Segal (1965), Parry (1966), Frischer (1970),

as particularly significant, either because of richness of language, as in the case of Hippolytus' prayer to Artemis (78–87), or because of intellectual allusiveness and complexity, as in the case of Phaedra's formulations about virtue (373ff.); and these have been subject to a variety of close examinations in recent critical literature.⁷⁸ The study of language has generally led to a better understanding of Hippolytus' prayer than of Phaedra's philosophizing. In the case of the latter, the persistent tendency to interpret parts of the plays as authorial manifestos without aesthetic significance has led to predictable and familiar confusions.⁷⁹

We see that discussions of Hippolytus' (sexual) purity (the crucial word *agnos*) are closely intertwined with Phaedra's 'claim to shame', which I have already discussed in §1.2.1. Segal (1970) sees purity as a central theme in the *Hippolytus*, and contrasts it with the word *aidos* as applied to Phaedra. Segal acknowledges that Hippolytus' sexual 'purity' is unusual, though he sees him as redeemed by the end of the play:

By the end of the play (1448-9) Hippolytus' narrow, priggish purity of 102 and 654-5 has become something deeper and more serious and at the same time something more profoundly in touch with the realities of the human condition.⁸⁰

Unlike Phaedra, whose final act is one of destruction, Hippolytus seems to regain his humanity, despite his death, in the relatively peaceful conclusion of the play.⁸¹ Other views of Hippolytus' character include Smoot (1976), who provides a response to Rankin (1974), interpreting Hippolytus' behaviour as narcissism and Segal (1978), who uses a psychoanalytical approach to analyse the Hippolytus and Pentheus characters.⁸²

Berns (1973), Bremer (1975), and Zeitlin (1985).

⁷⁸See previous list for Hippolytus' speech, on Phaedra's, Micheline cites: Hathorn (1957), Willink (1968), Claus (1972), Irwin (1983).

⁷⁹See for example Irwin (1983), 195-97 and Micheline (1987), 279-80.

⁸⁰Segal (1970), 298.

⁸¹For a similar view see Dimock (1977).

⁸²Characterisation of the two heroes is far from the only parallel that can be drawn between the *Hippolytus* and *Bacchae*. Both plays can be seen in a way as ultimately about the power of the divine, and what happens when that power is called into question, although Hippolytus does not go so far as Pentheus does in denying Dionysus' divinity altogether. The resonances that appear to the *Bacchae* in the *Hippolytus* are even more explicit in the ending of Seneca's *Phaedra* where Hippolytus' body is completely dismembered by the bull's attack and Theseus finds himself literally piecing together the bits that are left of his son. Pentheus' dismembered body is similarly brought on stage at the end of the *Bacchae*. Comparison between the two plays is also present in the scholarship from an early stage, from the passing reference in Tierney (1937), 45, to the full-scale analysis in Bellinger (1939). See also Grene (1939) and, for a more recent analysis, Micheline (1987), 316 especially. For conflations between the two in modern adaptation, see Zeitlin (2004), 64 on lines from the Hippolytus used in *Dionysus in 69*.

Although Roisman (1999) calls into question whether the conclusion of the play is in fact as peaceful as it might seem on the surface,⁸³ she too has sympathy for the hero: ‘Hippolytus evokes the pity and fear that Phaedra does not. No other character in the play has striven so hard to obtain a goal as Hippolytus, and failed so miserably in spite of his good intentions.’⁸⁴ It thus remains an item of debate whether one should judge Hippolytus entirely on his emphatic and hateful tirade against womankind, or grant him some sympathy for his complete inability to make any other character in the play understand his devotion to a life of chastity and purity. My research has shown that this debate is mirrored in the reception of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition, where Hippolytus-centric works range from sympathetic portrayals of Hippolytus as the drama’s hero and victim, such as Eugene O’Neill’s *Desire Under the Elms*, to portrayals focusing on his harsh misogynistic and narcissistic nature, such as in Sarah Kane’s *Phaedra’s Love*, with which I opened this chapter.

1.2.2 Seneca’s *Phaedra*

Seneca’s *Phaedra* significantly develops the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition in a number of ways. Seneca dispenses with the play of two halves and keeps Phaedra as a major player in the drama up to the end. Her suicide replaces the reconciliation between father and son as the climactic conclusion to the drama. It is Hippolytus, not Phaedra, who dies off stage before the drama is complete, and Phaedra’s death, not Hippolytus’, that brings closure to the conflict resulting from the queen’s illicit passion. The goddesses are also dispensed with, rarely to return in the modern adaptations of the myth. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate, via the review of scholarship on the Latin play, how some of Seneca’s alterations to the plot have had an effect on how some of the themes first raised by Euripides are re-cast in the modern reception of the play.

Although there is much speculation as to whether Seneca borrowed his source ma-

⁸³Roisman (1999), 147-153.

⁸⁴Roisman (1999), 168.

terial from either or both of the lost Euripides' *Hippolytus I* or Sophocles' *Phaedra*,⁸⁵ it is impossible to know with any certainty that Seneca knew either source. Fitch (2002) argues that Seneca's main source, aside from the extant Euripides, is Ovid. Almost every line of Ovid's *Heroides 4* is echoed in some way in this drama, although Seneca has clearly taken the themes from Ovid's imaginary letter from Phaedra and changed and developed them into the dramatic context. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* also features, in the messenger speech in particular (cf. *Met.* 15.497-529).⁸⁶

Phaedra's love

Perhaps what distinguishes Seneca's *Phaedra* most from Euripides' extant *Hippolytus* is the complex series of motivations behind Phaedra's illicit love for her stepson. In Seneca, where the gods do not provide the same directly motivating force that they provide in Euripides, Phaedra's *amor* is not simply the work of the goddess Aphrodite in her quest to gain revenge against Hippolytus for his rejection of her. Although Cupid and Venus are certainly involved in Phaedra's plight in Seneca, they make up but one of the many motivating factors behind her consuming *amor*. What this complex set of motivations, outlined in Phaedra's opening monologue (lines 85-128), means for Phaedra's characterisation has been much debated in the scholarship. The debate centres around whether Phaedra here is a manipulative, sex-crazed woman who will stop at nothing to consummate her desire for her stepson, or whether her struggle against her love can be considered with any of the same sympathy engendered by her Euripidean predecessor. The more sympathetic view is presented by, for example, Tobin (1966), who sees Phaedra as 'one of Seneca's finer portrayals', and 'as sympathetic a character as one will find in Seneca, due to her suffering caused by Hippolytus,

⁸⁵There are a few features of Seneca's play that may bear some affinity to the two lost plays: Phaedra approaches Hippolytus directly (as presumed in *Hippolytus I*) and Theseus is absent in Hades and presumed dead rather than at the oracle (that Theseus is in Hades is one of the few details that has survived from Sophocles' play).

⁸⁶Fitch (2002), 444. On the relationship between Seneca and Ovid, see also Armstrong (2006), 261-299. For the suggestion that Seneca may have used Virgil's Dido in Aeneid IV for inspiration for some of his heroines, including Phaedra, see Fantham (1975). On the originality of Seneca's play, see Henry and Walker (1966).

prolonged by the Nurse, and greatly increased by the return of Theseus.’⁸⁷

Another key difference, noted in the scholarship, between Euripides and Seneca, is that the two protagonists actually meet on stage, in a highly eroticised scene. The phallic symbolism of the unsheathing of Hippolytus’ sword is overt.⁸⁸ Given this overt sexual imagery, Phaedra’s use of *pudor*, the Latin word for shame,⁸⁹ in this scene seems ironic and desperate. Boyle sees Phaedra’s interaction with Hippolytus as shattering the temporary fantasy world that she created to rationalise the revelation of her desire, ‘returning her to the realm of her opening speech in the play, awareness of the monstrosity of her passion.’⁹⁰ While it is true that Phaedra does see her desire as monstrous, the eroticism is impossible to ignore here, as noted by Segal (1986), who says of this passage:

Death at his [Hippolytus’] hands would resolve her conflict between desire and morality and leave her with the *pudor* of a faithful wife. Yet the erotic undertone speaks another language, a language of desire, of *furor* (711) that she would have ‘healed’ differently. At one level her lines are a request for death; at another they are a continuation of the seductive discourse that she has been addressing to Hippolytus since the beginning of the scene.⁹¹

Even though she momentarily envisions her *pudor* preserved by her murder, by this point in the play Phaedra has lost all claim to shame. From this point onward, Phaedra will never stop pursuing Hippolytus. Even during her suicide after Hippolytus’ death, Phaedra speaks of her desire to follow her love in the underworld (lines 1176-80). Ultimately, Phaedra still clings to a sense of *pudor*, though in a very different way from her Euripidean predecessor. Seneca’s Phaedra understands that her love for Hippolytus is an abomination, and longs for her former sense of *pudor*; that *pudor*, however, is lost to her, and her love for Hippolytus is a much more real emotion, one inspired by

⁸⁷Tobin (1966), 67. Tobin goes on to cite Herrmann’s *Théâtre*, who captures the essence of Phaedra’s character when he refers to her as *une malheureuse*, e.g. ‘one who yields to her passion and takes pleasure in it, who lies and slanders, but who also struggles vainly against her instincts in the awful knowledge of the moral abyss into which she has plunged, and who finally learns how to punish herself for this downfall.’

⁸⁸Seneca’s Phaedra is not afraid to address Hippolytus by name, and does so on several occasions in the play (e.g. lines 612, 646 and 710).

⁸⁹With additional resonances of scrupulous, correct, appropriate and proper behaviour, c.f. *Oxford Latin Dictionary* s.v. *pudor*.

⁹⁰Boyle (1985), 1331.

⁹¹Segal (1986), 133.

a number of factors, from her Cretan ancestry to her unsatisfactory marriage, as well as the divine power of Cupid.

Madness is certainly an important theme in Euripides' *Hippolytus*,⁹² but the concept of madness (*furor*) is expanded even further in Seneca's version. Passion (*amor*) and madness (*furor*) are key themes in the play and in the scholarship – these architectonic emotions almost replace the divine element in the Euripides' play. As Leeman (1976) points out in his Stoic assessment of the *Phaedra*, Phaedra openly admits that her sense of reason (*ratio*) is overrun by her desire (referred to here as *furor*):

In Phaedra's case, her *ratio* is powerless against an *adfectus* which she should have suppressed from the very beginning. Her own consciousness of this state makes her a tragic heroine. When she fully realizes it, she exclaims *haec sola ratio est, unicum effugium mali: virum sequamur* – the 'dead' Theseus, not Hippolytus – *morte praevertam nefas* (253-254)! This is a Stoic solution in a situation where the practice of virtue has become impossible.⁹³

Note also the use of *furor* in line 184 (standing in contrast to the *ratio* earlier in the same line) and burning imagery in lines 187, 188, and 190-1.⁹⁴ Passion and madness are inextricably linked in Seneca's drama, and burning imagery is used throughout the play to describe both of these forces, which overwhelm Phaedra. Fitch (2002) discusses the connection between burning imagery and nautical imagery in the description of Phaedra's passion at lines 177-183, as follows: 'From the outset the imagery of love's fire, and of a ship swept away by the current, suggest that her [Phaedra's] passion will quickly overwhelm such self-control as she possesses.'⁹⁵ Phaedra's efforts to resist her passion are *in vanum*, and her ship is being carried away even though she knows she is headed in a disastrous direction. What is important here is not so much that she

⁹²The Nurse describes Phaedra's delirious words at her first entrance as *μανίας εποχον ῥίπτουσα λόγον* (line 214); Phaedra, returning to her senses, describes herself as *ἐμάνην, ἔπεσον δαίμονος ἄτην* (line 241) and later in the same speech says *τὸ δὲ μαινόμενον κακόν* (line 248).

⁹³Leeman (1976), 205.

⁹⁴There is a Virgilian intertext here also; the language is reminiscent of descriptions of Dido's passion in *Aeneid* IV. Many parallels could be drawn between the two queens, as Dido also finds herself manipulated by the gods, and needs persuading by a confidante (in her case her sister Anna) to give in to her love Aeneas. *Furor* appears eleven times in Book IV and *flamma* appears six times, e.g. *his dictis incensum animum inflammavit amore | spemque dedit dubiae menti, solvit pudorem* (IV.54-5); *uritur infelix Dido, totaque vagatur | urbe furens* ... (IV.68-9); *ardet amans Dido, traxitque per ossa furorem* (IV.101).

⁹⁵Fitch (2002), 440.

recognises the danger and perversity of her desire, but that she feels powerless against it, unable to fight it in any way.

Theseus and Hippolytus

As Fitch (2002) points out in his introduction to the play, the title of *Phaedra* should not be read as indicating that the play focusses only on one figure – as in Euripides, this is a tragedy of three people⁹⁶ and Seneca’s characterisation of Hippolytus and Theseus are equally important to consider in reviewing the scholarship on the Latin play. The play opens with focus on Hippolytus, who sings an energetic and enthusiastic ode on hunting – as Fitch points out, his easy assumption of dominance over the natural world is cast in an ironic light by his eventual destruction.⁹⁷ Yet there is more to this Hippolytus than his devotion to Diana and the hunt – he shuns the civilised world in an almost paranoid fashion.⁹⁸ Although he does refer to himself as a comrade of the goddess earlier in his opening ode (*ades en comiti, diva virago*, line 54), Hippolytus’ devotion to Diana in Seneca’s play is not reciprocated in the same way it is in Euripides. Seneca’s second choral ode makes it clear that there is no divine warrant for Hippolytus’ obsessive devotion to chastity⁹⁹ (and in this play even Diana is depicted as amorously interested in young men¹⁰⁰).

Hippolytus’ distrust of the city and civilisation also define his character in Seneca’s version, and justifies his preference for a celibate life. Fitch (2002) sees this as escapism:

No one responsive to wild nature can fail to appreciate [Hippolytus’] exaltation of the freedom and beauty found there. But his obsessive harping on the corruption found in cities and women makes it clear that the countryside represents for him an escape made necessary by paranoia about human guilt and corruption. His escapism is confirmed later in [Act 2] where his only means of dealing with Phaedra’s advances is to flee to the “woods and wild beasts” (718).¹⁰¹

⁹⁶Fitch (2002), 439.

⁹⁷Fitch (2002), 439.

⁹⁸See Fitch (2002), Introduction, 439-40.

⁹⁹Fitch (2002), 440.

¹⁰⁰Fitch (2002), 440. See also H.D.’s adaptation *Hippolytus Temporizes* (§3.3) for an amorous relationship between Artemis/Diana and Hippolytus.

¹⁰¹Fitch (2002), 439-40.

Hippolytus' rejection of civilisation is intricately linked with his rejection of women. For Hippolytus, lust and greed are two closely related dangers of civilised society. Hippolytus also makes special mention of stepmothers (*taceo novercas: mitior nulla est feris*, line 558), which cannot help but call Phaedra to mind. Interestingly, Hippolytus here uses the word *feris* indirectly to describe Phaedra, a word which Phaedra has used to refer to Hippolytus (*Amore didicimus vinci feros*, line 240), and a word that links him with her mother's love/prey, the wild bull.

Euripides' Theseus is rather different from the typical characterisation of the Athenian hero; the notorious womaniser is, in Euripides' extant version, actually very committed to his wife, emphasised by his extreme grief at her death and his staunch defense of his wife, based on her suicide note, against his son.¹⁰² In Seneca, however, Theseus is specifically characterised as a philanderer in order to help explain Phaedra's passion for Hippolytus. Boyle (1987) discusses how Phaedra laments her marriage, which was created not out of love, but to form a political alliance between Athens and Crete. Her husband has abandoned her, just as he abandoned all of the other women he has been associated with, including her own sister Ariadne.¹⁰³ Fitch (2002) shows how Theseus, from his entrance, is thematically associated with death¹⁰⁴ and his first words emphasise the length of time he has been in the world of the dead: *tandem profugi noctis aeternae plagam ... et vix cupitum sufferunt oculi diem* (lines 835-7). Fitch (2002), however, does also discuss Theseus' emotional side in Seneca. Theseus' attempts to persuade Phaedra not to end her life are reminiscent of the emotion he shows at his wife's death in Euripides: *Lacrimae nonne te nostrae movent?* (line 880), and he weeps for his role in the destruction of his son (line 1122).¹⁰⁵ Yet the harshness of Seneca's Theseus is also apparent in his threat against the Nurse (*vincite ferro. verberum vis extrahat | secreta mentis*, lines 884-5¹⁰⁶), which prompts Phaedra to make, albeit am-

¹⁰²Although Theseus as a committed partner is clearly a recent development; Hippolytus' status as νόθος is referred to several times throughout the play, including in Hippolytus' last words (cf. lines 309, 962 and 1083).

¹⁰³Boyle (1987), 141.

¹⁰⁴Fitch (2002), 442-3.

¹⁰⁵Fitch (2002), 539 n. 44.

¹⁰⁶Although it is acknowledged that harsh language against slaves would have been more acceptable.

biguously at first (lines 888-93), her accusation against Hippolytus (the accusation is made more explicitly with the word *stuprator* at line 897). Seneca's more negative connotation is perhaps cemented by Theseus' harsh condemnation of Phaedra at the close of the play: *istam terra defossam premat, / gravisque tellus impio capiti incubet* (lines 1279-80).

1.2.3 Racine's *Phèdre*

The original title of Racine's play, when it premiered at the Hôtel de Bourgogne on 1 January 1677, was *Phèdre et Hippolyte*. However, Racine amended the title to simply *Phèdre* in the definitive edition only ten years later in 1687, revealing his particular interest in the play's heroine.¹⁰⁷ The structure of Racine's play does borrow much from Seneca's similarly named *Phaedra*, most notably in the following three ways: Phaedra's suicide is moved to the end of the play, making it the climax of the drama rather than Hippolytus' death and reconciliation between father and son at the end of the Euripides; the direct divine hand is removed with the removal of Aphrodite and Artemis as speaking characters and the motivation for Phaedra's love is thus more complex and varied; and finally, Phaedra and Hippolytus meet on stage in a scene that borrows much from Seneca, in particular the use of Hippolytus' sword/dagger as evidence for the rape accusation that will follow. Despite the Senecan elements, however, Racine openly acknowledges his Euripidean influences in the opening line of his preface to the *Phèdre*, 'Voici encore une tragédie dont le sujet est pris d'Euripide,' and the paragraph that follows reveals Racine's detailed knowledge of his Greek source text.¹⁰⁸ We also have another significant body of evidence with regard to Racine's

¹⁰⁷Parish (1996), Introduction xiii.

¹⁰⁸*Quoique j'aie suivi une route un peu différente de celle de cet auteur pour la conduite de l'action, je n'ai pas laissé d'enrichir ma pièce de tout ce qui m'a paru le plus éclatant dans la sienne. Quand je ne lui devrois que la seule idée du caractère de Phèdre, je pourrois dire que je lui dois ce que j'ai peut-être mis de plus raisonnable sur le théâtre. Je ne suis point étonné que ce caractère ait eu un succès si heureux du temps d'Euripide, et qu'il ait encore si bien réussi dans notre siècle, puisqu'il a toutes les qualités qu'Aristote demande dans le héros de la tragédie, et qui sont propres à exciter la compassion et la terreur. En effet, Phèdre n'est ni tout à fait coupable, ni tout à fait innocente : elle est engagée, par sa destinée et par la colère des dieux, dans une passion illégitime dont elle a horreur toute la première : elle fait tous ses efforts pour la surmonter : elle aime mieux se laisser mourir que de la déclarer à personne ; et lorsqu'elle est forcée de la découvrir, elle en parle avec une confusion qui fait bien voir que son crime est plutôt une punition des dieux qu'un mouvement de sa volonté.*

knowledge and appreciation of the Greek original in the annotations that survive in two editions that Racine possessed of the ancient Greek text (the ‘Aldine’ edition of 1503 and the ‘Stephanus’ edition of 1602, both known to have been owned by Racine and bearing both verbal (fully written comments), and non-verbal (brackets, ticks, and other markings) annotations by the playwright). Phillippo (2003), in her book on Racine’s non-verbal annotations of Euripides, acknowledges that using annotations as an indication of an author’s relationship to their source text is a complex process that by definition only represents a small window into the overall creative process. She does however argue that it is:

an element offering a particularly fruitful line of investigation, presenting the inquirer with some of the raw materials potentially used by the artist, to set alongside the finished product, and invites exploration, even if definitive answers remain elusive, of what has happened, what choices have been made and what transformations effected, in between.¹⁰⁹

The *Phèdre* has a number of what Phillippo calls ‘clear echoes’ of lines of the Euripidean original. She also takes Racine’s prologue as evidence that Racine possessed a very detailed knowledge of the Euripidean original.¹¹⁰

Racine’s annotations of Euripides support his focus on the Phaedra character,¹¹¹ and this focus is also represented in scholarship on Racine’s version of the myth. Cairncross (1970), amongst others, sees Phaedra’s preoccupation with guilt as evidence of a religious element to Racine’s drama, relating to Racine’s return to his Jansenist faith during the writing of *Phèdre*. As a result, Cairncross argues, Racine can be seen to frame Phaedra’s struggle in a Christianised way as a struggle against sin.¹¹² The

¹⁰⁹Phillippo (2003), 3.

¹¹⁰To give an idea of the extent to which Racine interacted with the *Hippolytus* in particular, he provides detailed verbal annotations of lines 1-58 (Aphrodite’s prologue) and 274-312 (dialogue between the Nurse, chorus, and Phaedra, where her love for Hippolytus is first revealed) in the Aldine edition and line 307 (μὰ τὴν ἄνασσαν ἱππῖαν Ἀμυζόνα) and 628-50 (Hippolytus’ tirade against women) in the Stephanus edition. These are supplemented by extensive non-verbal annotations through to line 484 in the Aldine (thus including Phaedra’s great speech and the Nurse’s response) and 215-756 in the Stephanus (through to the end of the first half of the play ending with Phaedra’s death). Phillippo also mentions a few non-verbal annotations of the later half of the play, though not so comprehensively. There is some question of the authenticity of the markings, which may not all have come from Racine’s hand, although Phillippo does make a strong case for authenticity by studying the media of the markings, and the notes on the *Hippolytus* are not called into question (Phillippo (2003), 3-14).

¹¹¹See Phillippo (2003), 111-121, for detailed analysis of annotations on relevant passages.

¹¹²Cairncross (1970), 132-33.

religious argument has more recently been unpicked by James (1997), who, although acknowledging that Euripides' own skeptical take on the Greek gods and goddesses made him a favourable source for those later dramatists seeking a Christianising message within their plays, ultimately rejects a Jansenist interpretation of the *Phèdre*.¹¹³

Phaedra's fate – and her family's disastrous history in love – is also a predominant theme. In the play, Hippolytus first mentions Phaedra not by her name, but by her ancestry, calling her 'La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé.' Wygant (1999) places particular emphasis on this line and the importance of proper names in Racine. She points out, '*Phèdre* as a whole might be called Racine's tragedy of the Name: more proper names appear in *Phèdre* than in any of the preceding tragedies. There are 45 in all, and the first scene of the first act is the concentrated site of this procedure, containing 33 proper names. In one passage of 13 lines (81-93), there are 14'.¹¹⁴ And it is not just the use of the names themselves that is significant, but also the words they are rhymed with:

For Racine . . . the rhymed proper name as a metonymy for a character complex begins to mark out and secure that character complex, lending it either impetus ('fuite' [rhymed with 'Hippolyte' in 57-8]), or range ('ennemie' – 'adoucie' [rhymed with Aricie in 49-50 and 101-2]), or pathos ('méprisée', 'opposée', 'abusée' [rhymed with Thésée in 21-2, 61-2 and 125-6]), or even, perhaps, irony ('ordonne' [rhymed with Oenone in 141-2]).¹¹⁵

Most significant of all, as Wygant argues, is that the title character's name rhymes with nothing:

The name of *Phèdre* is thus conspicuous by its absence from the rhyme scheme of the tragedy. Like the dramatic device of delaying the entrance of the star until well into the action of the play, the absence of the name of *Phèdre* from the rhyme scheme makes the end of the Alexandrine a sensitive and suspenseful place. 'La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé' is accordingly not just a periphrasis at the level of the referentiality of the expression. It does indeed stand in the place of 'Phèdre' with respect to its meaning. But it is doubly periphrastic: both in the register of meaning and in the register of the sound the name of *Phèdre* has been replaced.¹¹⁶

¹¹³James (1997), 7-9.

¹¹⁴Wygant (1999), 22.

¹¹⁵Wygant (1999), 24.

¹¹⁶Wygant (1999), 25.

Racine's is what I would term a Phaedra-centric drama, and his focus is the all-consuming passion, and resulting guilt, of the queen as she faces her impending death, which is delayed, against her will, until the end of the play. This also is new for a Racinian tragedy, where death commonly provides a resolution, an escape for a despairing heroine; in *Phèdre*, 'the heroine is already dying when the play opens',¹¹⁷ and it is her path from a guiltless death (with her secret protected) to a culpable death (with her secret revealed, and Hippolytus dead as a consequence of the revelation) that provides the tragic action of the play. Phèdre's determination to die and her abhorrence for her passion resonates with Euripides (Seneca's Phaedra never repents of her love and dies ready to pursue Hippolytus – referred to as her prey – beyond the grave); however, the guilt element is added by Racine. Phaedra is consumed by her guilt, from her very first scene, where she says to Oenone, *J'en ai trop prolongé la coupable durée* (217). And her protestation, just before revealing her love for Hippolytus, *Quand tu sauras mon crime, et le sort qui m'accable, Je n'en mourrai pas moins : j'en mourrai plus coupable* (241-242), comes eerily true at the close of the play, when she has failed to protect her secret, Hippolytus has died because of it, and Phaedra can find no peace, even in death.¹¹⁸

Despite an overall focus on Phaedra, Racine's annotations also reveal an interest in the father-son relationship between Theseus and Hippolytus, and in particular Euripides' sympathetic portrayal of the Theseus character. This could serve to explain Racine's departure from Seneca's harsher portrayal of the king. Phillippo, however, makes it clear that the male characters are still secondary to the Queen:

... Once again, the idea is refracted through Phèdre's own outlook, and involves a new irony reflecting painfully on Phèdre's experience: her belief in Hippolyte's continuing imperviousness to love is of course mistaken. Racine's shift of emphasis to Phèdre was probably the most influential factor in his crucial alterations to Hippolytus' role (at least as important as the influence of *bienséance* and popular taste for a love interest); it is characteristic that most of his echoes of the Euripidean conception of Hippolytus likewise involve a prioritising of Phèdre's perspective.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷Cairncross (1970), 139.

¹¹⁸In the underworld, her father Minos will see her, and be horror-struck at her crimes.

¹¹⁹Phillippo (2003), 110.

The fact that Racine's Hippolytus, although he used to be like the Hippolytus of Euripides, has now succumbed to love, is crucial. In an ironic contrast to the Euripidean original, where Hippolytus' aversion to all women leads Aphrodite to engineer his downfall, it is his first, and quite out of character, love of Aricia that, in Racine, ultimately leads to his death. Although Theseus condemns him based on Oenone's accusation of rape, Phaedra comes on stage determined to exonerate Hippolytus when there is still time, but holds her tongue when she finds out that it is not all women Hippolytus spurns, but only her, as he has fallen in love with Aricia.

Racine's characterisation of Theseus also has much in common with the Euripidean version, as he presents him in a much more sympathetic light than Seneca. There is a tenderness to Theseus that is reinforced at various points in the play, from when he takes the stage in Act 3 and is shocked to find his wife and son so distant to when he tells the audience how he left on his mission 'reluctantly' in line 959. That being said, Racine shows an acute awareness of the mythological context of the Theseus character, even if he is not, as Hippolytus points out in lines 22-26, the philandering adulterer he once was. Pittas-Herschbach (1990) argues that Racine did his best to preserve the mythological context of his play via the Theseus character, even though this context may have had little relevance to his seventeenth-century audience:

Of course Greek mythology could hardly have the same significance for the seventeenth-century theatre-goer as it did in antiquity. Racine's predecessors, including Garnier,¹²⁰ tended to suppress the "couleur locale" provided by mythological allusions. Racine, on the other hand, was solicitous in preserving it wherever possible. In *Phèdre*, the character of Thésée is set against an elaborate mythological background. Thésée is also, as we have seen, an important focal point (equalled only by Phèdre) for the religious/moral *problématique* of the play. In this way, Racine effected a rehabilitation of the somewhat tarnished image of a rakish Thésée, as it had evolved in the plays of his predecessors. In addition, the inclusion of numerous mythological allusions was an attempt by Racine to impart a certain distance to the characters and the action of his play. The mythological allusions, combined with a historically and geographically remote setting, were a means of achieving this effect.¹²¹

¹²⁰Garnier wrote an earlier French version of the Hippolytus myth in 1573.

¹²¹Pittas-Herschbach (1990), 276-7.

This context is perhaps most dramatically emphasised in the opening scene, where Hippolytus recalls how Theramenes used to ‘recount [his] father’s history’ to him as a child (lines 73-94).

Finally, it is in the introduction of Aricia as Hippolytus’ one and only love interest that most sharply differentiates Racine’s version from Euripides and Seneca. Aricia also adds a new dimension to the final argument between Theseus and Hippolytus. Racine begins, as Euripides, with Hippolytus trying to defend himself against the accusation by reminding his father of his aversion to women and his pure character (lines 1105-1112). Although there is far less material on the characterisation of Hippolytus in Racine’s annotations of Euripides, especially in the crucial latter half of the play, his annotation of Caspar Stiblinus’ assessment of Hippolytus’ so-called defence speech to his father at line 983¹²² is significant and seems to have contributed to Racine’s characterisation of Hippolyte, as Phillippo argues:

These comments are in part a formal rhetorical analysis, and, true to his training, may interest Racine as such. Stiblinus’ remarks, however, also give a detailed analysis of the impact and effectiveness of Hippolytus’ speech. Racine constructs his own Hippolyte’s equivalent speech(es) along slightly different lines, but one can see that some of the aspects to which Stiblinus’ note draws attention are reflected in this adapted composition.¹²³

Racine also appears to borrow the daylight imagery (*Le jour n’est pas plus pur que le fond de mon coeur*) in his 1112-13 from Euripides lines 993-5 (φάος in line 993), and his defence of his pure character in Racine 1092 (*Examinez ma vie, et songez qui je suis*) echoes Euripides 1006 (παρχένον ψυχήν ἔξων). As Phillippo concludes, ‘So in Racine’s marking of [Stiblinus’] note, and in its relationship to his own composition of the confrontation scene, we get some glimpse of the types of impact Racine felt

¹²²As quoted in Phillippo (2003), 119-20: ‘Hippolytus’ speech relies on the great confidence of his innocence, and is full of spirit and feeling: but so tempered that respect and reverence towards his father is held to even when he is disgracefully [or ‘unjustly’] accused of adultery with his stepmother. He first strives to capture goodwill from his father’s person: πάτερ. Then from the matter itself τὸ μέντοι πράγμα. Next from his very own personality, ἐγὼ μὲν. Then he makes [him] attentive, πρῶτα δ’ ἄρξομαι. At length after all the parts of the introduction he passes on to calling to witness of his own innocence, εἰσορᾷς φάος τόδε... which he brings forward with various arguments, meanwhile refuting his father’s speech against him.’

¹²³Phillippo (2003), 120. Traits that Racine adopts for his Hippolyte include respect for his father (Racine 1088-90) attempt to ‘capture goodwill’ from Theseus (Racine 1119, the only time Hippolyte uses the affectionate ‘mon père’ for Theseus).

the father-son confrontation to have in Euripides. These glimpses may take us part of the way towards understanding what, in Racine's view, made that confrontation worth including in his own play, and made it apt to incorporate both the aspects of Hippolytus' role which he retained and those which he altered.¹²⁴

1.3 Theoretical Framework

*A text works or it doesn't. If you feel its power, so much the better for you; if you don't, so much the worse.*¹²⁵

This thesis employs a cross-genre theoretical approach, which draws heavily upon adaptation theory, but with key elements from translation and performance theory, especially with respect to transformations between cultural contexts. I openly acknowledge the blurred lines between translation and adaptation,¹²⁶ and the integral role that performance analysis can play in studying an adaptation, especially more recent works that I have had the benefit of seeing performed.

Each work under discussion in my thesis represents a newly re-imagined, re-constructed version of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition as a whole (the membrane of source materials I referred to at the beginning of this chapter), although each individual version may be influenced by prioritisation of one character over another, or by a particular thematic focus based on social factors (such as the consanguinity of the relationship between Hippolytus and Phaedra) or developments in intellectual history (such as psychoanalytical theory). It is not so much that a single 'source' cannot be identified – indeed many of the playwrights, musicians, dancers, and directors I discuss in this thesis do claim Euripides, Racine, or Seneca as their 'source' – but rather that to analyse any of these works against one source in isolation is not only reductive, but problematic, in that excluding the other intervening versions would lead to an incomplete understanding of the way in which the tradition has been reconfigured in this new medium. Just

¹²⁴Phillippo (2003), 120-21.

¹²⁵France (2001) on 'What is a Good Translation?' in his chapter 'Translation Studies and Translation Criticism'.

¹²⁶See especially Hutcheon (2006) and Sanders (2006) from the adaptation perspective, and e.g. Reynolds (2011) from the translation perspective.

as Martindale (1993) refers to the destabilisation of ‘text’,¹²⁷ I also argue that the idea of a single ‘source’ is corrupted by the mere existence of intermediate versions, and it is impossible for post-Racinian adaptations to avoid influence, however indirect or subconscious, from the rich variety of ‘source’ material, despite any attempt to claim a single source.

Adaptation is far from a linear medium; it is a medium marked by cross-reference and backward as well as forward influence (again the membrane analogy is helpful here). It will therefore be an integral part of my study, to explore how and when playwrights, composers, and choreographers have chosen, in their re-workings of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition, to draw on particular themes brought out by the three source texts. An adaptation’s intrinsic value comes from this paradoxical relationship to its ‘source text’, or texts; the audience’s appreciation, as Hutcheon has noted, comes from ‘repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change.’¹²⁸ It would be reductive, then, to judge these works by their fidelity to one particular source, since it was none of these authors’ intention simply to rewrite an original text. Instead I explore how each creator used the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition – be it Euripides, Seneca, Racine or a combination of the three – as a springboard or sounding board for their own unique creations, which are in many instances as much a product of the society and culture in which the adaptation was created, as they are independent creations. And I discuss, in turn, the ways in which their departures from their source bring ‘pleasure (and risk)’ to the audience, enhancing not only our understanding of the adaptation in question but the source text as well.

Many of the works discussed in this thesis, however, do not fit so comfortably into the medium of ‘adaptation’, and, in fact, elements of translation theory serve to enhance analysis of particular works included in my study, especially those, such as Hughes (1998) and Morgan (2000), which openly refer to themselves as translations. France

¹²⁷Martindale (1993), 13.

¹²⁸Hutcheon (2006), 4.

(2001), editor of the *Oxford Guide to Literature in [English] Translation*, observes that Translation Studies has recently transformed the way in which translations are viewed, adding nuance to a previously linear relationship between original and translation, and giving more credit to the ways in which translations are created and can vary depending on the same kind of cultural or societal factors that influence adaptations:

The silence surrounding translation has been more often breached in recent years. For one thing, new views of writing cast doubt on the clear hierarchical distinction, a distinction sometimes expressed in gender terms, between the so-called original (primary, ‘male’) and the translation (secondary, ‘female’). At the same time there has been a growth of interest in the actual phenomenon of translation and the problems it poses. This flourishing of the new discipline ‘Translation Studies’ has brought with it the desire to do greater justice to the place of translation within our culture, to encourage awareness of what goes on in translation, to make translation and the translator more *visible*. . . .Translations are not, nor should they be, transparent windows onto an ‘original’, and the aim of this volume is to suggest to readers that translation involves transformation, and that this transformation is worthy of our attention.¹²⁹

Translation and adaptation are complex arts, and even more so when they overlap, as is the case in a number of the pieces that I discuss in this thesis.

As Hardwick (2009) argues in her work on poets’ interaction with classical drama, there are a number of factors at work here:

. . . the scholarship of rewriters and translators, which may vary at points on the spectrum between knowledge of the ancient languages, ability to select and consult scholarly mediating translations, and the use of popular translations for information on content and form; the impact of this on the writer’s poetic and dramatic technique; the relationship between the modern writer’s translation or adaptation of classical texts and the rest of his or her work and life – the art and selectivity of the writing subject. The balance between all these factors reflects whether the modern author sees the new translation/version as situated more within the afterlife of the ancient text or more within the literary and dramatic tradition in which he or she aspires to ‘star’ . . . In either case the relationship with the rest of the modern author’s work is a shaping factor, but its interaction with the classical text may be symbiotic or competitive, even confrontational.¹³⁰

¹²⁹France (2001), Introduction.

¹³⁰Hardwick (2009), 48.

The blurred relationship between a translation or adaptation and its ‘source’ is, I believe, a testament to the power of the textual tradition. Source texts, as I have argued, draw on one another. All of the works I discuss in this thesis, whether ‘original’ or intermediary, whether translation or adaptation, or a bit of both, are ultimately a matter of re-constructing the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition in and of itself, about telling and re-telling, re-shaping, or even re-inventing, the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra.

Hardwick’s analysis above also allows for a broadening of the definition of translation in a way that resonates with the definition of adaption – both are in their own ways re-tellings and re-purposings of earlier material. It is possible to ignore common theoretical questions that can be asked of any re-construction of the ancient texts. I would argue that any theoretical distinction between translation and adaptation, except for the obvious one of degree, is largely artificial. The questions of, for example, language (not only what languages are translated between, but also details of how that language is employed, e.g. dialect, profanity, pace, imagery) and cultural/historical context (re-telling the story in a different time and/or place, e.g. colonial India, modern Greece, rural America) all resonate within theoretical frameworks of adaptation, translation and performance.

Whilst there are translations, in the most literal sense, that could not be classed as either adaptation or performance, all adaptations and performances can, in their broadest sense, be seen as forms of translation. Bassnett captures this best in her Prologue to Parker and Mathews (2011):

We are all translators in one way or another, even those of us who only live with one language in our heads. Engaging with different people in our daily lives, we also engage in acts of translation, as we shift linguistic registers, edit and adapt what we choose to communicate, reshape narratives in different contexts for different people. . . . Translation in the widest sense of the word is an endless process of reshaping, retelling, reworking and we all, to some extent, engage in versions of that process in our daily lives.¹³¹

¹³¹Parker and Mathews (2011), 1.

There are several factors I would highlight from this introduction that have direct bearing on my own theoretical approach: firstly, translation does not have to be between two different languages; a number of the artists whose work I discuss have not been looking at an ‘original’ in its original Greek, Latin or French and this need not diminish the importance of their work; secondly, it is the context that is of chief importance, as this defines the aims and ambitions of the adaptive work; and thirdly, translation is a fluid process without clear boundaries or a clear beginning and end; this fluidity in form underpins my own assertion that the definition of a single ‘source’ restricts the analysis of any subsequent re-working.¹³²

In his introduction to a collection of essays by D. S. Carne-Ross, Haynes (2010) sets the context of translation studies as follows:

Around the mid-twentieth century, New Criticism mostly left translations alone; after that, translation studies (as the field is now known) was largely occupied with the essential work of recovering historical contexts, understanding cultural assumptions, and investigating linguistic and theoretical problems of translating. It is not common for the two to be brought together.¹³³

Carne-Ross, he argues, managed to combine linguistic analysis with the historical context of the translation, and it is that synergy that also underpins my analysis.

Translating can refer to a number of different possible activities, which means that the idea of ‘translation’ is often called into question.¹³⁴ As Haynes goes on to argue, quoting Carne-Ross, translation is not, and cannot be, about replacing the original:

Whatever the relation is between a work and its translated version, it cannot be one of identity. Yet translation is “often saddled with an improper obligation: it is supposed to ‘give you the original.’ ” The problem is that “it doesn’t and can’t and shouldn’t try to.” . . . Since an English version does not give you the original, we need to ask what it does give. The answer is

¹³²As Bassnett herself goes on to say of Homer: ‘The unending nature of translation is fascinating and problematic. We have only one *Iliad*, but there are countless *Iliads* in circulation and will be countless more in the future. There are no limits to the number of translations that can be made. . . . Translations are a reminder of the absurdity of assuming there can ever be a definitive text’ (Parker and Mathews (2011), 2).

¹³³Haynes (2010), 13.

¹³⁴Haynes (2010), 13.

not known in advance, and the question must be put to each version; this is the reason why translation is an essentially critical act.¹³⁵

And the ‘critical act’ of translation is often very much about context and conveying a particular message within a particular political, historical, or scholarly context. This thesis will explore, for example, cultural and political questions around consanguinity and definitions of incest, which led to the absence of versions of plays about Hippolytus and Phaedra in the nineteenth century; it also explores how H.D. and Eugene O’Neill pre-empted psychoanalytical analysis of the *Hippolytus* with their adaptations (1927 and 1924 respectively) that were heavily influenced by the Freudian psychology that featured in their lives and work. Carne-Ross captures this aptly:

True translation is a commentary on the original, not a substitute for it. Like criticism, to which it is closely allied, its role is interpretative. Every age has to work out its own relations to the creative achievements of the past, and the task of the translator, like that of a critic, is to define those works of other times and places which are most living and reveal those aspects of them which we most need today.¹³⁶

Lexical accuracy is of little concern to any of the works under consideration in this thesis. Carne-Ross compliments H.D. on her ability to capture the ‘image’ of Greek tragedy, ‘working her way to the reality of gesture and emotion behind the still, splendid words.’¹³⁷ This focus on gesture and emotion is applicable more widely and I think it captures why a flexible theoretical approach, what Hall refers to as ‘theory ordered *à la carte*,’¹³⁸ is most appropriate for the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition.

A number of the works under discussion here have important performative elements that must be taken into account in their analysis. This is especially true of works that I have had the benefit of seeing in performance, such as Kane (1996), but also of works with strong performance elements, such as Martha Graham’s ballets (1962 and 1983) and O’Neill (1925), for which a film version exists which is presented in a very similar way to how the play itself was staged. Elements of performance theory, such as those

¹³⁵Haynes (2010), 14-15.

¹³⁶Carne-Ross cited in Haynes (2010), 239.

¹³⁷Haynes (2010), 240-1.

¹³⁸Hall and Harrop (2010), 27.

exploring the connections between the history of literary analysis and the history of performance, as well as the transformative nature of a performance event, are also significant for analysis of the operatic works under discussion in this thesis, which have strong audio-visual and performance elements.

Hall and Harrop (2010) present a new collection of discussions on performance reception, which consider what elements of a dramatic work's analysis only take shape in performance. While I would still maintain that performance is, in many ways, simply another form of translation, some aspects of analysis are best captured in performance. Some images are inevitably better captured visually rather than verbally. Hall, however, rightly cautions against prioritising performance over textual analysis or vice versa: 'There has certainly been a disreputable tendency among literary scholars to censure theatre people, and *vice versa*, but it is unnecessary if we accept that neither 'script-alone' nor 'script-as-performed' is superior to the other: it is merely *different*.'¹³⁹ Performance can be seen as a secondary act of translation, which adds another layer to the interpretation of the adapted text. Hall continues, 'this partly results from the plurality of individual agents (director, designer, composer, lighting designer, actors) whose subjectivities leave their traces on the 'carrying across', the 'trans-lation' of the text into the media of physical enactment and vocal delivery. The text is exposed to artillery from a whole battalion of human interpreters, rather than to single combat.'¹⁴⁰ Performance also adds a layer of physicality to the realisation of the text: 'the *somatic* quality of theatre means that it offers special evidence of a society's approach to such basic aspects of human experience as the body, gender, sexual desire, injury, and suffering, in addition to the physical rites of passage (mating, birth, and death).'¹⁴¹ And as Hall herself admits, this would apply equally to other performed media, such as opera, dance and film.

It is not that one cannot appreciate the thematic nuances of a script without having seen it performed, but rather that the performance adds a depth to one's interpretation

¹³⁹Hall and Harrop (2010), 12.

¹⁴⁰Hall and Harrop (2010), 15.

¹⁴¹Hall and Harrop (2010), 16.

of the words, and vice versa. Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* provides a good example of this, where the setting of the play is almost a character – this is captured in the play's prologue which describes the two elms brooding over the farmhouse, which itself becomes emblematic of feminine space within the play. This imagery is enhanced in the film version, where a strong contrast is made between indoor and outdoor space, adding a scene between the Theseus character, Ephraim, and the Phaedra character, Anna, in the parlour, which has been shut up after the death of Ephraim's first wife (the mother of the Hippolytus character, Eben). This visual representation of the Phaedra character's vain attempt to take control of the female space in the play is enhanced on film for those viewers who have knowledge of the dramatic text. The love between Abbie and Eben grows out of a maternal love that can almost be felt in the air of the room.¹⁴² The complexity of the influence of the 'source' materials on an adaptation also at times comes out in the visual elements of the work's performance. For example, the goddess Aphrodite, who has no speaking or singing role in George Roumanis' opera, appears superimposed above the action, and impacting on the action, in the film version of the opera; or Ted Hughes' or Edwin Morgan's adaptations, which claim to be translations of Racine, but with the set designs of their live performances showed much greater affinity to the tradition's earliest, Euripidean, antecedent.

Carne-Ross himself even admits that performance sometimes is uniquely capable of filling in what a translation lacks, referencing MacNeice's translation of Cassandra speaking in the *Agamemnon*: 'Yet if English words and meter cannot establish this transition, dance and music could. A passage like this cannot be translated into English, but it could be performed; and if the dance and the music were right, it would hardly matter what words Cassandra was given to speak.'¹⁴³ Carne-Ross could easily have been describing Martha Graham with these lines, who in many ways has done exactly what he describes in her modern dance versions of Greek tragedies, which include two versions of the *Hippolytus*.¹⁴⁴ The cross-genre nature of my analysis necessitates the

¹⁴²For more detailed analysis of this and other aspects of O'Neill's play see §3.2.

¹⁴³Haynes (2010), 244.

¹⁴⁴See the opening paragraphs of Chapter 4 and §5.2.

application of certain theoretical frameworks beyond the genre within which they were originally developed (e.g. Hutcheon (2006), whose adaptation theory was developed largely in relation to film). This need, however, is not new or novel; it is in fact a necessary feature of the ‘*à la carte*’ approach to reception theory. As Sanders (2006) points out in the introduction to her work on adaptation and appropriation, Julia Kristeva, who first coined the term ‘intertextuality’, herself applied her theoretical approach beyond the boundaries of literature. ‘She saw art, music, drama, dance and literature in terms of a living mosaic, a dynamic intersection of textual surfaces.’¹⁴⁵

As Hutcheon (2006) points out, however, adaptation across media opens its own set of theoretical questions and considerations:

...it is when adaptations make the move across modes of engagement and thus across media, especially in the most common shift, that is, from the printed page to performance in stage and radio plays, dance, opera, musical, film, or television, that they find themselves most enmeshed in the intricacies of the medium-specificity debates; so too when works are adapted from either print or performance to interactive media, with their multiple sensory and semiotic channels.¹⁴⁶

All media, indeed, have their own ‘composite conventions’ and their own ‘grammar and syntax that all operate to structure meaning for the perceiving audience.’¹⁴⁷

Hutcheon challenges a number of clichés surrounding adaptation across genres, which helpfully demonstrate the artificiality in restricting analysis to a media-specific theoretical frame: ‘(1) Only the Telling Mode (Especially Prose Fiction) Has the Flexibility to Render Both Intimacy and Distance in Point of View; (2) Interiority is the Terrain of the Telling Mode; Exteriority is Best Handled by Showing and Especially by Interactive Modes; (3) The Showing and Interacting Modes Have Only One Tense: The Present; The Mode of Telling Alone Can Show Relations among Past, Present, and Future; and (4) Only Telling (in Language) Can Do Justice to Such Elements as Ambiguity, Irony, Symbols, Metaphors, Silences, and Absences.’¹⁴⁸ These clichés seem to come out of some misguided loyalty to a particular genre, and a hierarchical approach to

¹⁴⁵Sanders (2006), 3.

¹⁴⁶Hutcheon (2006), 35.

¹⁴⁷Hutcheon (2006), 35.

¹⁴⁸Hutcheon (2006), 33-77.

media which sees adaptation as somehow less than ‘original’. I have already discussed at length how the very definition of ‘original’ is complex and in many ways artificial. Hutcheon urges us instead of listening to ‘protective literary critics’ and ‘self-protective writers’ to ‘listen to the adaptor for a change.’¹⁴⁹ And the adaptors that I am working with in my thesis do not themselves shy away from cross-genre influence (e.g. Martha Graham’s relationship with Robinson Jeffers, Benjamin Britten’s reliance on Robert Lowell’s translation of Racine) and many works themselves challenge the boundaries of their own genre (e.g. Brian Friel’s meta-theatrical *Living Quarters* and Sarah Kane’s visceral *Phaedra’s Love*).

As we have heard, Eugene O’Neill’s stage notes to *Desire Under the Elms* make a concerted effort to show the atmosphere of the farmhouse in his opening and throughout, and one can get a very visual sense of the space just by reading the script. It is also worth noting that Hutcheon is largely talking about adapting from novels to films, and the leap is not so great in the case of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition; with the possible exception of Seneca, whose performative function has been called into question, my three ‘source texts’ were all written for performance and therefore have inherently performative elements that are naturally absent from novels. It is therefore the case that all of the works under discussion, even those not intended for performance, such as H.D.’s plays, have at least some, even if implied, visual and aural element. The range of visual as well as aural mechanisms at work in the various adaptations under discussion here (across the media of drama, dance, opera, and film) simply add richness to the analysis, but need not necessitate different theoretical frameworks of analysis. In fact, a flexible, so-called ‘à la carte’ theoretical approach, which allows for textual, as well as visual and aural comparisons and analysis, is perhaps best suited to the cross-genre nature of modern reception studies.

This is not a chronological study, although one does find that certain approaches cluster around certain time periods. For example, it is no accident that two devoted Freudians chose to approach Hippolytus in the very same year in the 1920s. The

¹⁴⁹Hutcheon (2006), 77.

traditional diachronic, combined with a deeply rich, synchronic focus, such as McCabe (1993), would not allow for the fluidity needed to look at such a diverse collection of modern versions, across a range of media and across such a vast time frame. This thesis is, rather, a study of thematic clusters in the performance reception of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition as a collective whole, via the three principle source texts. My methodology will therefore be a combination of thematic analysis and case study. Each chapter has a particular thematic focus, within which I provide longer and more detailed case study analyses from particular works across multiple genres. For each case study I utilise a range of primary source material, from published texts, video, or audio, to personal testimonies captured in biographies or autobiographies. For some pieces, the analysis is enhanced by my own observations in seeing the work in performance, para material in programmes from stage performances, first-hand interviews with a composer or choreographer, or contemporary reviews in the media. For others, this kind of material is simply not available or relevant (for example, in the case of H.D. where the work was never intended for performance), and the analysis is thus more text-based.

The thesis is divided into four analysis chapters focussing on important thematic concentrations within the reception of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition. The next chapter focusses on the question of consanguinity and the impact of the incest motif on early adaptations, including Edmund Smith's *Phaedra and Hippolytus* of 1729 and Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* of 1733 (with substantial revision for revivals in 1742 and 1757). In Chapter 3, I explore two 20th-century adaptations, Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and H.D.'s *Hippolytus Temporizes*, and in particular the striking similarities between the two texts, both of which emerged during a decade heavily dominated by Freud's discoveries. In Chapter 4 I focus on adaptations that explore and problematise Hippolytus' sexuality, looking in detail at two adaptations by Robinson Jeffers, *Cawdor* of 1928 and *The Cretan Woman* of 1954, as well as providing a brief discussion of Martha Graham's *Phaedra's Dream* of 1983. My fifth chapter focuses exclusively on the operatic and dance traditions, arguing that these genres lead to

a prioritisation of the Phaedra character. Works under discussion in this chapter include George Roumanis' opera *Ode to Phaedra* (composed between 1973 and 1978, premiered as an opera on television in 1995), Martha Graham's ballet *Phaedra* of 1962, and Richard Alston's choreography for Benjamin Britten's *Phaedra*, which premiered as part of the Barbican Britten festival in November 2013. This thesis concludes with a final chapter which traces the role of the divine within the reception tradition of Hippolytus and Phaedra examining in particular how recent adaptations move away from an earlier focus on psychology and human emotion to a new emphasis on the supernatural forces in the wider world.

Chapter 2

Consanguinity

*No enmitie is equall unto that
That dark disdayne (the cause of every evill)
Dooth breede full ofte in consanguinitie.*¹

The hundred-year period leading up to the end of the eighteenth century saw the re-discovery of Greek tragedy, and, as Hall and Macintosh point out in their introduction to *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660-1914*, ‘by 1789 the majority of Sophoclean and Euripidean plays had been rewritten (often radically) for performance in the English language.’² These early adaptations of Greek tragedy showed ‘a fascination with transgressive sexuality (incest, adultery),’ that was common at the time:

The 1670s interest in mythical sexual deviants was part of a generalised theatrical articulation of the Restoration’s libertarian reaction against the stringent moral legislation passed during the Interregnum, which had made incest and adultery capital offences. But it was equally a continuation of an earlier pre-Civil War trope common in political discourse linking problems in the monarchy with sexual disorder.³

There was a dramatic change of taste in the late eighteenth century, and a growing sense of discomfort around the incest theme. A 1770s production of Dryden and Lee’s once hugely popular adaptation of Sophocles, the so-called ‘English Oedipus’ (first performed in 1676), saw audiences walk out by the end of the third act; and a production

¹Gasgoine and Kinwelmersh’s *Jocasta* (1566), 265, as quoted in McCabe (1993), 121.

²Hall and Macintosh (2005), x.

³Hall and Macintosh (2005), xvi.

opportunity for Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* (1611), a brother-sister incest drama, in 1754 was turned down.⁴

Across the channel in France, the incest theme was similarly popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos* was extremely popular in France with approximately 30 adaptations and six translations published between 1614 and 1818.⁵ Its popularity, however, persisted into the nineteenth century, with a change in emphasis on Oedipus as a tyrant king.⁶ This political commentary was a key feature of a censored version of Shelley's adaptation published in 1821:

Whether Shelley had any knowledge of the French revolutionary reworkings of Sophocles' tragedy – one thinks particularly of Chénier's subversive *Oedipe-Roi*, which had only very recently been published in 1818 – it is clear that his version needs to be placed alongside its French counterparts. Like these French plays, Shelley's version contains a tyrannical king of the *ancien régime*.⁷

Despite these early nineteenth-century politicized adaptations of Sophocles, we see very few adaptations of the Hippolytus and Phaedra story at this time. The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) records only one performance in the entire nineteenth century, scenes from Racine's *Phèdre* and *Iphigénie* by Madame Rachel at the St James Theatre between 1846 and 1853, alongside a German translation of the Hippolytus published in 1851.⁸

In this chapter I explore how in the period leading up to the eighteenth century the reception of both Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos* and the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition were closely linked through a fascination with 'transgressive sexuality', used not only for its shock value but also for its political commentary. For this analysis, I rely heavily on McCabe's comprehensive study *Incest, Drama and Nature's Law, 1550-1700*.⁹ I also look at how incest was perceived culturally across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and how this, in turn, affected the dramatisations of incest during

⁴Hall and Macintosh (2005), 215.

⁵Hall and Macintosh (2005), 216.

⁶Hall and Macintosh (2005), 222-3.

⁷Hall and Macintosh (2005), 239.

⁸*Phèdre* (1846 - 1853), accessed at <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/9476> <2 April 2016>.

⁹McCabe (1993).

this period. At the turn of the eighteenth century, social and legislative changes lead to a change in the dramatised treatment of the incest motif.

This chapter features two case studies, one from England, Edmund Smith's *Phaedra and Hippolytus* of 1707, and one from France, Jean-Philippe Rameau's opera *Hippolyte et Aricie*, first staged in 1733 and substantially revised in 1757, written in this transition period. Both show a tension between the sensationalism surrounding incestuous sex in the seventeenth century, which McCabe discusses at length in his analysis, and the growing restraint and embarrassment around sexuality and incest, in particular, that appeared in the eighteenth century, and which led to censorship of incest dramas such as the *Oedipus* at the end of the nineteenth century. While the *Oedipus Tyrannos* retained its use, if less frequently, for political commentary, the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition was less obviously translatable into a drama about a tyrannical ruler. The ancient and modern plays concerning Hippolytus and Phaedra were thus shunned on account of this squeamishness until the rise of Freudian thinking in the late nineteenth century, when concerns around sexuality were brought back into common discourse.

2.1 The Incest Theme in Renaissance Drama

Incest taboos have always existed, but have varied widely in scope and in the zeal with which they have been enforced.¹⁰ Taboos in the 16th and 17th centuries were largely governed by the Levitical decrees. These forbid marriage for a whole range of familial relationships, and not all blood-related: mother or father; father's wife (e.g. stepmother); sister; son/daughter's daughter; father's wife's daughter; father's sister; mother's sister; father's brother or wife; daughter-in-law; brother's wife; a woman and her daughter or daughter's daughter; a woman and her sister, in the woman's lifetime. However, punishments prior to 1800 were lenient and the incest taboo was thus largely unenforced. Stone (1977) argues that there is therefore reason to think that other taboos such as sodomy and bestiality were more repugnant to popular standards of morality than incest at this time, which may well have been relatively common in

¹⁰Stone (1977), 484.

overcrowded houses with adolescent children still at home.¹¹

The question of whether a sexual relationship between Phaedra and Hippolytus would actually be classified as incest has been debated. Barrett, in his commentary, argues ‘no’, because it was permissible in Athenian law to marry one’s half-sister.¹² McCabe rightly points out that Barrett’s justification is irrelevant as relationships with mothers (and anyone in a maternal position, such as stepmothers) were entirely prohibited. In fact, even if Theseus had been dead, the relationship would have been considered incestuous and forbidden by law. The fact that the relationship between Hippolytus and Phaedra is not consanguineous, and that they are (perhaps) roughly the same age, is irrelevant to the argument. Phaedra is Theseus’ wife and that kinship outlaws her desire for her stepson. A Roman parallel can be found in Cicero’s *Pro Cluentio*.¹³ Ancient evidence aside, McCabe’s assertion that Renaissance commentators had no hesitation in assessing Phaedra’s desire for her stepson as incestuous is deeply significant. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries incest between stepparents and stepchildren was treated by the ecclesiastical courts as directly comparable to incest between the equivalent blood relatives.¹⁴ McCabe quotes the sermons of Bishop Lake making this explicitly clear: ‘whereas we call persons fathers-in-law, mothers-in-law, and so brothers and sisters, we must not understand it of meere positive Law, but it is a secundarie Law of nature, unalterable, saving onely by God ... and affinitie doth in some sort equall consanguinitie, as grafted branches doe those that are naturall.’¹⁵

McCabe argues that, in the Renaissance the twin concepts of natural virtue and natural depravity informed the treatment of the incest theme. Incest was seen as the ultimate breach of natural law and also served as a powerful metaphor for other forms of social and/or political corruption.¹⁶ McCabe continues:

All of the great incest plays from *Oedipus Tyrannos* to *Desire Under the Elms* invoke ancestral tensions deeply rooted in the human psyche, but

¹¹Stone (1977), 491. See especially note 14.

¹²McCabe (1993), 80.

¹³McCabe (1993), 81.

¹⁴McCabe (1993), 81.

¹⁵Quoted in McCabe (1993), 184.

¹⁶McCabe (1993), 5.

always in very precise social and cultural contexts. ...The incest motif may thus be developed as a metaphor or analogy for any number of human problems related to changing concepts of natural, positive or divine law. Wherever desire of any kind is opposed by prohibition, wherever scepticism erodes received doctrines, the theme of incest may emerge as a powerful dramatic focus for the resulting conflict since it involves the very nature of man as a political animal – ‘political’, that is, in the widest sense of the term: the attitude of the *polis* to the proper relationship between governors and governed, law and licence.¹⁷

Incest on the stage, therefore, represents one way in which society deals with this very difficult subject; perhaps a fact of every day life but still deeply problematic on multiple levels. The best known incest cases of the early Renaissance period were those presented on the stage, which, despite their fictional status, have certain recurrent themes, including sexual abuse committed by patriarchal power and the deleterious absence of influential female figures capable of mediating between paternal authority and filial autonomy. McCabe’s study focuses on the changing conceptions of natural law and unnatural desire as these found dramatic expression through the constant reassessment and reinterpretation of classical texts, which provided formal rhetorical models for handling dangerous material, such as incest.¹⁸

One early example of the political connection between incest and political power can be found when Queen Elizabeth I found her own status as leader questioned in terms that combine themes from both the Oedipus and Hippolytus traditions of incest. The birth of Mary Queen of Scots’ son James VI in 1566 disrupted the delicate balance of power that existed between the two queens as joint rulers of Britain. An obvious heir allowed Mary to dispute Elizabeth’s title, and for others represented an opportunity to break from the ‘dynastic uncertainty’ engendered by Elizabeth’s famously adulterous and fornicating father Henry VIII.¹⁹ Elizabeth’s unmarried and childless status was even questioned in the Commons where it was suggested that if she remained thus without an obvious successor to the throne, she might ‘be spoken of not as a nurse, not as a mother of her Country, but as a stepmother, nay, as parricide of her Countrey’.

¹⁷McCabe (1993), 25.

¹⁸McCabe (1993), 27.

¹⁹McCabe (1993), 122-3.

She might, perhaps, become as ‘unnatural’ in her own way as Jocasta.²⁰

Elizabeth, however, used the Oedipus myth to emphasise the dangers of patricide, and the resulting risks of future successors taking up arms against the reigning monarch. Moreover, although she exploited the politics of maternity, in many ways she found herself more directly connected to that other object of incestuous desire, the virginal Hippolytus:

Jocasta’s tragic attempts to establish a succession at Thebes were doubtless intended to remind Elizabeth of her duties in this area, but the simplistic moralizations of the fable proved inapplicable to the complexity of the situation. Responding to the curse of kinship by refusing to admit its political consequences, Elizabeth isolated herself, like Hippolytus, in virginity, affording only spiritual maternity to country and kin alike. If her father confounded kinship by wedding too often, she would refuse to wed at all and the curse would end.²¹

Incest was thus part of political discourse, and corruption, sexual or otherwise, within the family was commonly used to reflect corruption in the state more generally.

Both Oedipus and Hippolytus were used as exemplary models for the incest dramas of the period, and sixteenth-century tragedy saw a range of incest dramas which romanticised some aspects of incestuous desire while at the same time focussing on their political implications. These dramas were also used to explore more fundamental questions about the ability of tragedy to influence real life behaviours. McCabe paraphrases the Venetian commentator Antonio Minturno on these themes as follows:

Minturno rated *Oedipus Tyrannos* and Euripides’ *Hippolytus* as amongst the supreme examples of tragic art, peculiarly productive of the cathartic effect it was supposed to generate.²²

The incestuous lovers presented on the stage at this time were not without sympathy, as McCabe points out in his analysis of Speroni’s *Canace* of 1542: ‘in presenting the incestuous pair as essentially sympathetic, star-crossed lovers, he established a tradition destined to endure to the end of the seventeenth century.’²³ McCabe also

²⁰McCabe (1993), 123.

²¹McCabe (1993), 123-4.

²²McCabe (1993), 98.

²³McCabe (1993), 102.

speculates on audience reaction to the lovers in *Canace*: ‘The protagonists are neither wholly good nor wholly evil, but rather of the middle nature (‘mezane’) recommended by Aristotle and shared by the vast majority of humankind. As love is the most prevalent of human maladies, their sin is one which any member of the audience might well empathise or even commit.’²⁴ Relationships between siblings were more easily romanticised (especially if the siblings had, as was a common trope, been separated at birth and were consequently unaware of their blood relationship). Relationships between parents and children remained more difficult to present positively. McCabe even references a version of the *Oedipus Tyrannos*, Tasso’s *Il Re Torrismondo* of 1587, that substituted sibling incest for the mother-son incest of the original to make it more palatable.

Where parent-child incest did feature, more often than not alternative justifications were presented. The death of a spouse, for example, could kindle affection for a child. In Massinger’s *The Unnatural Combat*, McCabe points out how ‘the very resemblance of daughter to mother is a powerful factor in motivating incest as the father attempts to rekindle the passion which inspired his first choice of partner.’²⁵ Knowledge of and consummation of incestuous desire were also used to make the taboo more palatable. McCabe describes the incest dramas of Beaumont and Fletcher as follows: ‘Repeatedly, Beaumont and Fletcher (or Fletcher and Massinger) evoke both the anxiety and the fascination of incest while shying away from the reality, supplying the passion without the consummation as elsewhere they supplied the danger without the death.’²⁶ In one of Beaumont and Fletcher’s plays, *Cupid’s Revenge* of 1607-1612, the couple is even kept in ignorance of the fact that their relationship is incestuous, which, as McCabe argues, could have exonerated them of the sin completely in the eyes of the contemporary audience: ‘Many contemporary causists would have regarded his action [to keep the incest from the couple] as justified. Commenting upon the thirtieth story

²⁴McCabe (1993), 105.

²⁵McCabe (1993), 182. This is a common trope, first appearing in Seneca, throughout the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition where Phaedra sees in Hippolytus a younger version of her husband Theseus, who may or may not also be presumed dead.

²⁶McCabe (1993), 191.

from Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*, for example, Bishop Joseph Hall expresses approval for the decision to allow an incestuous couple to live together in blissful ignorance despite being father and daughter. . . . "to distinguish betwixt the state of incest, and the sin of incest".²⁷ It was therefore the knowing that was seen as problematic, above the action itself.

The role of the woman in the incestuous relationship was also an important motif in these early incest dramas. McCabe describes Lelia from Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Captain* of 1612, who, estranged from her father as a girl, seduces a stranger and defiantly maintains her desire even when his identity as her lost father is revealed, as follows:

She is the 'demonised' female par excellence conjured up onto the stage for a brief, exciting moment but destined to vanish in a puff of moral smoke, carrying with her the displaced desires of any father in the audience who had ever entertained a thought subversive of his own 'reverence' – witness her 'masculine' rhetoric and effrontery, polar opposites of the 'silence and chastity' deemed appropriate for Renaissance women.²⁸

Defiant females became even more dangerous where incest was concerned, as such relationships threatened the order of succession (which was also an important political factor). McCabe continues: 'Enshrined in the definition of "mother" is the power to sustain or overthrow the entire social edifice by validating or repudiating its systems of succession and inheritance' and 'ideally women function as guardians of genealogy, their marital chastity ensuring the proper conduct of succession whether aristocratic or mercantile. Patrimony is an entitlement entirely dependent upon maternal chastity. In effect, the mother's honour guarantees the father's confidence in identifying his heirs.'²⁹ Incest thus could become a way of subverting this patrimony, giving women a kind of power in choosing a partner that could not produce a legitimate heir. Nourmahal, the heroine of Dryden's incest drama *Aureng-Zebe* of 1676, a tale of 'stepmotherly seduction' and 'overt sexual rivalry between father and son', written just one year before Racine's *Phèdre*, represents another example of this kind of defiant female lead,

²⁷McCabe (1993), 192. See also note 7.

²⁸McCabe (1993), 206-7 and note 40.

²⁹McCabe (1993), 210-12.

described in the play as one of those ‘bold wretches who with brazen front | can revel in their crimes unblushingly.’³⁰

Incestuous lovers were not always universally condemned, especially as the century progressed and the focus turned more inwards toward the psychology behind such relationships. McCabe describes the trend as follows: ‘As drama emerges as an increasingly sceptical medium, marginalising choric moralists in favour of psychologically tortured “immoral” heroes, arguments from natural law prove contradictory and inconclusive. Sympathy gravitates towards the incestuous couple and away from societies which condemn them.’³¹ Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* was emblematic of this more nuanced portrayal, as McCabe summarises: ‘Incestuous love is its theme not its platform, and it neither wholly exonerates nor wholly condemns its protagonists.’³² Even the word incest is not used until Act V of the play, ‘as though it has not actually occurred until one of the partners comes to regard it as such.’³³ This sympathetic portrayal was enhanced in what McCabe terms ‘a growing fascination with the darker aspects of human psychology’ and melancholia more generally. The philosopher Robert Burton proposed the following cure for love melancholy in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*: ‘When no other means will take effect ... | let them go together, and enjoy one another.’³⁴ This culminates in Ford’s *The Maid’s Tragedy*, which:

constitutes a peculiarly cynical adaptation of the Hippolytus myth since neither party seeks to disguise or extenuate in any way the nature of their relationship. On the contrary, the taboo is essential to the attraction. Unlike previous Phaedras, the Duchess bawdily enforces kinship: ‘Let it stand firm both in thought and mind | That the Duke was thy father’ (lines 145-6). So far as their moral status is concerned, the Levitical prohibitions are merely ‘idle degrees of fear’ (line 125). For his part, Spurio will avenge his bastardy through incest ultimately hoping to ‘depose’ his father in state and ‘bed’ simultaneously, as Lussurioso is falsely accused of intending (II.3.22). Sexual politics and state politics fuse.³⁵

This political dimension of incest, which we have already seen in some of the language

³⁰Lines 851-2 as quoted in McCabe (1993), 271.

³¹McCabe (1993), 218.

³²McCabe (1993), 228.

³³McCabe (1993), 235.

³⁴As quoted in McCabe (1993), 244 and note 12.

³⁵McCabe (1993), 247 and note 17.

used to describe Elizabeth I's succession issues, was another important feature of incest dramas of this period. Gager's *Oedipus* of 1578 is described by McCabe as drawing out 'deeper political implications by expressly relating the Oedipal "curse" to the civil wars in which Eteocles and Polynices effect the dual destruction of their natural mother, Jocasta, and their political mother, the Theban state.'³⁶

Gager's play also inspired his contemporary John Rainolds, in a critique of the play, to raise questions about whether incest depicted on stage could inspire the real thing. McCabe summarises the argument as follows:

However cantankerous the detail of Rainold's arguments, the central point remains crucial because it bears upon the nature of tragic *catharsis* in relation to the theme of incest. Is it possible, Rainolds asks, that the Platonic view is correct, that tragedy can corrupt rather than purge? Is it possible that incest is a crime like all others to which there is no barrier in nature but only in positive law? Is it possible that the mere presentation of the crime calls that law into question and erodes rather than enforces the taboo? And is it possible, Gager asks in return, that what passes for moral virtue is little more than emotional repression?³⁷

These anxieties, and the questions they raise about whether incest is natural or unnatural, and whether its representation on stage could be considered helpful or dangerous, would persist across the century: 'use of the incest motif by Tudor dramatists remains interesting in itself to the extent that it was popularly supposed to bear reference – through the "looking glasse" – to a contemporary decline in sexual mores. . . . sexuality is political as politics is sexual, and incest functions as an appropriate metaphor for political disturbance by virtue of received concepts of natural law uniting private and public morality in the interests of the familial state.'³⁸ This political focus was also a key feature in Dryden's incest dramas in the latter part of the seventeenth century. McCabe says of *Aureng-Zebe*, 'A political implication seems inescapable directed alike at heirs apparent and presumptive';³⁹ and Dryden's additions to his translation of the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* (lines 845-50) suggest 'that he regarded incest and treason

³⁶McCabe (1993), 110.

³⁷McCabe (1993), 115.

³⁸McCabe (1993), 119-20.

³⁹McCabe (1993), 266.

as somehow analogous, perhaps as the incidence of unnatural relationships in domestic and political “families” respectively.’⁴⁰

This was set against a dramatic change in legislation when in 1650 an Act of Parliament was passed making incest an offence punishable by death.⁴¹ McCabe summarises the immediate impact as follows:

Hitherto incest had never been a criminal offence, and its punishment had remained the exclusive prerogative of the ecclesiastical courts (temporarily defunct in the Interregnum) although, through curious anomalies of local practice, justices of the peace in various counties occasionally intervened in matters of sexual morality such as incest and adultery, in the interests of public order.⁴²

This law proved completely out of touch with both common law and public opinion and had lapsed by 1660. McCabe describes a more typical incest punishment, as recounted in Richard Gough’s *History of the Myddle* of 1701 as follows:

A latter-day Phaedra, one Sarah Ryley of Accrington, convicted of incest with her stepson in 1692, was ordered ‘to stand at the cross in Blackburn on market day in October with a notice back and front, “For incest with My Husband’s Son”, and on the 19th November in Altham Chapel’. In other words, exposure was deemed sufficient punishment and public penance sufficient expiation.⁴³

The law, however, seems to have represented a sharpening of focus around incest as a political and social problem. Thomas Rymer reviewed a number of incest dramas in his *Tragedies of the Last Age* of 1677, including Beaumont and Fletcher’s *A King and No King* and Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, calling the incestuous love between Arbaces and Panthea in *A King and No King* a ‘canker’, which ‘the Audience will naturally loath and detest.’ Rymer also argued that it would be impossible for audiences to sympathise with such ‘unnatural’ events as incestuous desire and suggested that incestuous loves should be portrayed as rushing ‘headlong to desperation and misery.’⁴⁴ Rymer was

⁴⁰McCabe (1993), 280.

⁴¹McCabe (1993), 264-5 and note 6. The Act was, as quoted in McCabe, ‘for the suppressing of the abominable and crying sins of Incest, Adultery and Fornication, wherewith this Land is much defiled’.

⁴²McCabe (1993), 265 and note 8.

⁴³McCabe (1993), 265 and notes 9-11.

⁴⁴Rymer (1956), 48-9.

followed by Jeremy Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* in 1698, who criticised Dryden's *Love Triumphant* using similar language: '[Alphonso] complains to *Victoria* that *Nature doats with Age*. His reason is, because Brother and Sister can't Marry as they did at first: 'Tis very well! We know what *Nature* means in the Language of Christianity, and especially under the Notion of a Law-giver.'⁴⁵

McCabe's work demonstrates the complicated history of incest drama in the English Renaissance and Restoration period. His study concludes with a very bleak view of the drama in the subsequent period when 'strict political and moral censorship played their part in draining the stage of the very sense of moral daring which made the Elizabethans and Jacobean great.'⁴⁶ There is no doubt that there was a shift at the turn of the eighteenth century, and that Collier's work must have had some influence on this. Margherita Laera also argues for Collier's significant influence on English drama:

It is clear that what most preoccupied Collier was the representation of female sexuality and 'intemperance' but, in his rhetoric, patriarchal views of the role of women are combined with Christian preoccupations with purity.⁴⁷

Laera also cites the impact of the 1737 Licensing Act which made state censorship of theatre 'much more effective and constructive'⁴⁸ and would not really be abolished until the 1960s. Both McCabe and Laera see Edmund Smith's adaptation as emblematic of this newly stifled theatrical environment, speaking of his play in terms such as 'failure of dramatic nerve' and a 'purged version of the Phaedra myth.'⁴⁹ What I hope to demonstrate in the next section is how Smith's adaptation is actually more complicated than these analyses allow. Yes, he was writing in a changed landscape, where censorship was a much greater actuality, but his play does show many of the hallmarks of the earlier period, including a Phaedra character with a strong sense of agency, and there is an undercurrent of political commentary that recalls some of the

⁴⁵Collier as quoted in McCabe (1993), 290.

⁴⁶McCabe (1993), 291.

⁴⁷Laera (2013), 166.

⁴⁸Laera (2013), 167.

⁴⁹Laera (2013), 167 and McCabe (1993), 290-1.

issues around inheritance and succession covered by earlier dramatists.

2.2 Edmund Smith's *Phaedra and Hippolitus*

Edmund Smith's *Phaedra and Hippolitus* has not been favourably received in modern times. The play was described by Swinden (1997) in his analysis of modern translations of Racine's *Phèdre* in less than enthusiastic terms:

Otway was an experienced man of the theatre and, after Dryden, the best of the English neoclassical tragedians, and Philips is not an inconsiderable poet. The same cannot be said of Edmund Smith, the first translator of *Phèdre*. Nevertheless, and in spite of its hybrid half verse, half prose form, Smith's Racine isn't essentially different from or worse than theirs.⁵⁰

Swinden concludes his brief analysis of Smith with the dismissive 'Smith isn't worth spending much time on' and uses this early translation simply to make a generic point about the problematic nature of translations of Racine into English, all of which are marred by 'the figurative bias, the blurring of specific reference, an appearance of stasis in the disposition of the "pictures," and indecision as to whether the staple verse form should be blank verse or rhyming couplets.'⁵¹ Swinden is overly, and mistakenly, focussed on each translator's so-called success in rendering the Racinian verse into what he considers suitably poetic and dramatic English. Smith departs from Racine to such an extent that such line-by-line analysis hardly takes account of the complexity of Smith's adapted version of the plays within the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition. Swinden also does not take into account Smith's other likely influences, the Euripidean and Senecan versions.

If we are to trust the character of the author presented with the fourth edition of Smith's text,⁵² then Edmund Smith's play saw great success, at least in its own time. Oldisworth, in his introductory 'A Character of Mr Smith' refers to Smith's 'long and perfect intimacy with all the Greek and Latin Classicks; with whom he had carefully compared whatever was worth perusing in the French, Spanish, and Italian (to which

⁵⁰Swinden (1997), 210.

⁵¹Swinden (1997), 212.

⁵²I take all quotations from Smith (1729), the fourth edition of the text printed for Bernard Lintot.

languages he was no stranger) and in all the celebrated Writers of his own Country.⁵³ Oldisworth also shows Smith to have a keen appreciation for the value of combined ancient and modern source material: ‘He considered the Ancients and Moderns, not as Parties or Rivals for Fame, but as Architects upon one and the same Plan, the *Art of Poetry*, according to which he judged, approved, and blamed, with Flattery or Detraction.’⁵⁴ I am unsure what, other than the proximity of time, led Swinden (1997) to treat Smith’s *Phaedra and Hippolitus* as a translation of Racine, especially since Mr. Prior’s epilogue to the play mentions only one source:

An Oxford Man, extremely read in Greek,
Whom from Euripides makes Phaedra speak;
And comes to Town to let us Moderns know,
How Women loved two thousand Years ago.⁵⁵

Swinden (1997) also dismisses Smith without due consideration of the popularity of the text in its contemporary context. As Oldisworth wrote in 1759:

His Phaedra is a consummate Tragedy, and the Success of it was as great as the most sanguine Expectations of his Friends could promise or foresee. The Number of Nights, and the common Method of filling the House, are not always the surest Marks of judging, what Encouragement a Play meets with: but the Generosity of all the Persons of a refined Taste about Town, was Remarkable on this Occasion. . . . But as to Phaedra, she has certainly made a finer Figure under Mr. Smith’s Conduct, up on the English Stage, than either Rome or Athens; and if she excels the Greek and Latin Phaedra, I need not say, she surpasses the French one, though embellished with whatever regular Beauties, and moving Softness, Racine himself could not give her.⁵⁶

At least according to Smith’s contemporaries, this was a tragedy of Phaedra, based on (and in fact better than) her three antecedents (‘the Greek and Latin Phaedra’ referring to Euripides and Seneca respectively, and ‘the French one’ to Racine). This

⁵³Smith (1729).

⁵⁴Smith (1729).

⁵⁵Smith (1729). Hall and Macintosh (2005) show a similar tendency to prioritise ancient Greek source material in performances of Dryden and Lee’s English *Oedipus*: ‘Whilst the preface to the printed edition of the play (1679) and the epilogue both spell out the multiplicity of sources (Sophoclean, Senecan, Shakespearean, and Cornelian), the prologue delivered in the theatre might well have led the unsuspecting spectators into believing that they were receiving Sophocles *au naturel*’ (Hall and Macintosh (2005), 4).

⁵⁶Smith (1729), editorial note.

play is undoubtedly about Phaedra, but it is also a drama about incestuous love and its consequences.

The epilogue of the play⁵⁷ attempts to downplay Phaedra's crime, referring to it as an 'awkward Love' and a mere 'Scruple', which would have been rendered legitimate if Theseus had 'fairly dy'd' (even though this does not fit with the Levitical definition that would have been in force at the time). And for those audience members for whom this would have been insufficient exoneration, further encouragement was provided:

But if these gay Reflections come too late
To keep the guilty Phaedra from her Fate,
If your more serious Judgement must condemn
The dire Effects of her unhappy Flame:
Yet, ye chaste Matrons, and ye tender Fair,
Let Love and Innocence engage your Care;
My spotless Flames to your protection take,
And spare poor Phaedra for Ismena's sake.⁵⁸

These final lines also raise the question of whom this tragedy is really about, by introducing Ismena as an alternate object of sympathy. This tragedy is very much constructed to provide two alternatives: it is about incest, and unabashedly so, but the relationship between Hippolitus and Ismena is offered as a sort of antidote to this potentially unsavoury aspect of the plot.

The play opens with two of Smith's own characters, Cratander (glossed in the *Dramatis Personae* as 'Captain of the Guards' and thus a Theramenes figure) and Lycon (glossed in the *Dramatis Personae* as 'Minister of State' and who serves some similar functions to the Nurse in other versions) in conversation. The initial focus is on Phaedra's state, and she is described as 'resolute in Grief' and 'obstinately wretched', which contrasts with her usual good humour. The characterisation of Phaedra begins before the audience meets her, as a woman out of sorts, determined on destruction, but notably also young and beautiful. Her relationship with Theseus is described in harsh

⁵⁷Well! Phaedra liv'd as chastely as she could,
For she was Father Jove's own Flesh and Blood;
Her awkward Love, indeed, was oddly fated,
She and her Poly were too near related;
And yet that Scruple had be laid aside,
If honest Theseus had but fairly dy'd (Smith (1729), B2).

⁵⁸Smith (1729), B2.



Figure 2.1: The character of Hippolytus; image taken from Smith (1729).

terms: ‘Why did she give her Person and her Throne | To one she loathed’.⁵⁹ The throne, and royal power, are key themes in this adaption, as in many incest dramas of the preceding centuries, and desire for power is a key motivator for many of the subsidiary characters. Cratander even goes so far as to suggest that Hippolytus would have been a better match for the Queen:

CRATANDER: Why did she wed old Theseus? While his Son,
The brave Hippolytus, with equal Youth
And equal Beauty might have fill’d her Arms.⁶⁰

Again, age is emphasised and the Queen and Hippolytus are described as of the same age. The two men speculate that Phaedra’s obvious hatred for Hippolytus, which Lycon, as the Queen’s Minister, openly shares, might be because Hippolytus represents a potential challenger to her son for the throne of Crete. Hippolytus is also characterised as a strong warrior. The issues around succession are thus set up at this early stage in the play.

⁵⁹Smith (1729), B2.

⁶⁰Smith (1729), B4.

Ismena then enters, glossed in the *Dramatis Personae* as ‘a Captive Princess, in Love with Hippolitus’. She is therefore an Aricie figure (Hippolytus’ love interest in Racine), but also serves some of the same function as the Nurse in other versions, and this is the role she plays at this juncture.⁶¹ Shortly after Ismena, Phaedra enters in a crazed state, eager for woods and the hunt.⁶² Phaedra, like her predecessors in other versions, is horrified at the mention of Hippolitus’ name, although she immediately worries for her son and his inheritance: ‘[my son] may be doom’d to Chains, to Shame, to Death, | While proud Hippolitus shall mount his Throne.’⁶³ Thus Smith adds a new motivation to Phaedra’s passion, one that as §2.1 has demonstrated, was of key concern in dramas around incestuous relationships: a concern to secure power and a political future for her children.

Phaedra’s guilt⁶⁴ is also emphasised (as in Euripides and Racine) but her family history is added to this (as in Seneca).⁶⁵ Like in Seneca, Phaedra sees herself as the most cursed of her line: ‘I fall the last and most outdone of all’ ... ‘Alas I groan beneath the Pain, the Guilt, the Shame of impious love’.⁶⁶ Here also is our first, albeit indirect, reference to incest. Phaedra’s virtue is also emphasised, which echoes her *aidos* speech in Euripides:

PHAEDRA: Why was I born with such a Sense of Virtue,
So great Abhorrence of the smallest Crime,
And yet a Slave to such impetuous Guilt?
Rain on me, Gods, your Plagues, your sharpest Tortures,
Afflict my Soul with any thing but Guilt,
And yet that Guilt is mine.⁶⁷

⁶¹The contradiction of Ismena’s role as both Phaedra’s carer and rival is noted by Lycon: ‘Are you not robb’d of your Athenian crown? Was not your royal Father Pallas slain, I and all his wretched Race by conquering Theseus? And do you still watch o’er his Consort Phaedra’ (section B4).

⁶²Interestingly Smith does not exploit this as a connection to Hippolitus – Hippolitus’ connection to Diana is never mentioned by Smith, who instead focusses on his characterisation as a skilled warrior.

⁶³Smith (1729), 6. This concern about her children’s inheritance echoes Euripides lines 419-25. There are also echoes of the *Medea* here.

⁶⁴PHAEDRA: ‘Too long have I preserved that guilty Life ... Alas, my Hands are guiltless; But oh my Heart’s defil’d’ (Smith (1729), 7).

⁶⁵PHAEDRA: ‘O cruel Venus! How fatal Love has been to all our Race!’ (page 7, cf. Seneca lines 124ff. which are also noted in the margins of Smith (1729) at this point in the text.)

⁶⁶Smith (1729), 7.

⁶⁷Smith (1729), 8.

When her love is revealed, Phaedra becomes determined to die. All, including Ismena (despite her love for Hippolitus, which she has revealed to the audience in an aside), swear to keep the Queen's love a secret, but she does not accept this. Phaedra goes on to reminisce about the Love for Hippolitus that overtook her from the moment she first caught sight of the Prince at her wedding to Theseus. She launches into a long description of Hippolitus, comparing him to Mars: '[his] lovely sparkling Eyes shot martial Fires | Oh Godlike form! Oh Extasy and Transport!'⁶⁸

Hippolitus is also described as having compassion for the Queen, which, as far as I can tell, is unique to Smith's version, in language reminiscent of love elegy:

PHAEDRA: Oft I received his fatal charming Visits;
Then would he talk with such an heavenly Grace,
Look with such dear Compassion on my Pains,
That I could wish to be so sick for ever.
My Ear, my greedy Eyes, my thirsting Soul,
Drank, gorging in the dear delicious Poison,
'Till I was lost, quite lost in impious Love:
And shall I drag an execrable Life:
And shall I hoard up Guilt, and treasure Vengeance?⁶⁹

We see again an indirect reference to incest, with the same phrase 'impious Love'. Lycon, here taking on an aspect of the Nurse character, offers to try and persuade Hippolitus to love the Queen. At this point a Messenger enters to say that Theseus has died in battle 'as Theseus ought.'⁷⁰ This opens the door to the legitimisation of Phaedra and Hippolitus' relationship, which Lycon, like the Nurse before him, seizes upon:

LYCON: Dismiss that Grief and give a Loose to Joy:
He's dead, the Bar of all your Bliss is dead;
Live then, my Queen, forget the wrinkled Theseus,
And take the youthful Hero to your Arms.⁷¹

Once again the youth of Hippolitus is emphasised, in contrast to his elderly father (this is why he is a more suitable match for Phaedra). There is also an indication

⁶⁸Smith (1729), 10.

⁶⁹Smith (1729), 10.

⁷⁰Smith (1729), 12.

⁷¹Smith (1729), 13.

that Phaedra's relationship with Theseus was never consummated, offering further legitimacy to her love for his stepson. If the marriage was not consummated, were they then ever really married, and thus could this in fact not be incest after all, as Phaedra can hardly be Hippolitus' stepmother without legitimately being married to his father?⁷²

In ACT II Phaedra and Hippolitus meet on stage. Hippolitus first enters with the Queen asleep, and Lycon speaks to him about the Queen's distress (without revealing precisely what it is). Hippolitus is eager to help and swears on his sword to keep the Queen's secret. However, Phaedra awakes before the secret is revealed. Hippolitus shows great tenderness to the Queen, saying: 'could I hate the Royal Spouse of Theseus, my Queen, my Mother?'⁷³ He even goes so far as to promise to look after her child and give him 'all a Father's Love.'⁷⁴ Hippolitus has unwittingly blurred the family hierarchy and, consequently, the lines of succession in his attempt to console the Queen, both emphasising her role as his 'mother' but also putting himself in the position of father figure to her child. This sends Phaedra over the edge (and a marginal reference⁷⁵ draws our attention to Seneca 632ff. as a comparison):

PHAEDRA: A Father's Love!
O doubtful Sounds! oh vain deceitful Hopes!
My Grief's much eased by this transcending Goodness.
And Theseus' Death fits lighter on my Soul:
Death? He's not dead! he lives, he breaths, he speaks,
He lives in you, he's present to my Eyes,
I see him, speak to him – My Heart! I rave
And all my Folly's known.⁷⁶

⁷²PHAEDRA: 'And bless'd be Heav'n that steel'd my stubborn Heart, That made me shun the Bridal Bed of Theseus, And give him Empire, but refuse him Love' (Smith (1729), 13). There is a plot inconsistency here; Smith has added the possibility that Phaedra and Theseus' marriage was never consummated but, as we have seen, Phaedra still has a child in his adaptation (there is no indication of who the child's father was, however Theseus really is the only option).

⁷³Smith (1729), 16.

⁷⁴Smith (1729), 17.

⁷⁵The 1729 text I consulted had marginal annotations from an early reader to passages in Seneca and Euripides.

⁷⁶Smith (1729), 17.

Hippolitus does not understand yet what this ‘Folly’ is, but Lycon is quick to spell it out, saying ‘All, all proclaim Imperial Phaedra loves you.’⁷⁷ Hippolitus is horrified, calling the love ‘such monstrous Crimes’ (getting closer to the word ‘incest’, but still not able to name overtly the crime). Hippolitus’ tenderness is completely reversed and he even goes so far as to blame Phaedra for Theseus’ death, having driven him away with her refusal to consummate the marriage. Phaedra quite dramatically threatens to kill not only herself but Hippolitus and everyone who knows her secret. And during the heated exchange, Ismena enters the stage, unseen but listening.⁷⁸ Lycon intervenes and promises to confine Hippolitus for his safety and the Queen’s. Eventually Lycon and the Queen exit and Hippolitus and Ismena are left alone on stage.

Here it is revealed that the two love one another, however Ismena encourages Hippolitus to marry Phaedra to preserve his life:

ISMENA: O I could ever dwell in this Confinement!
 Nor wish for ought while I behold my Lord;
 But yet that Wish, that only Wish, is vain,
 When my hard Fate thus forces me to beg you.
 Drive from your Godlike⁷⁹ Soul a wretched Maid;
 Take to your Arms (assist me Heaven to speak it)
 Take to your Arms Imperial Phaedra,
 And think of me no more.⁸⁰

Ismena emphasises the political nature of the proposed relationship, identifying Phaedra as the one who holds the power (calling her ‘Imperial Phaedra’). After the wedding, however, Hippolitus reaffirms his love for Ismena and they decide to flee together. The lovers’ exchange emphasises the Queen’s instability and madness (subtly questioning her suitability as ruler), referring to her as ‘raving Phaedra’.

ACT III begins with a much improved Phaedra, completely unaware of the young lovers’ plans to flee. Lycon comments: ‘How her eyes sparkle! How their radiant Beams | Confess their shining Ancestor the Sun!’⁸¹ Phaedra is happy and generous,

⁷⁷Smith (1729), 17.

⁷⁸Smith (1729), 19, stage note.

⁷⁹This is not the first time this attribute is used of Hippolitus, who is also referred to as godlike by Phaedra.

⁸⁰Smith (1729), 21.

⁸¹Smith (1729), 30.

giving Lycon a province in Cydonia for playing matchmaker. However her effusive joy is short-lived as it is soon revealed by a Messenger that Hippolitus has disappeared and was seen heading toward the port with Ismena. Phaedra first blames Ismena but quickly turns from anger to agony, forced to accept that Hippolitus returns Ismena's love. What's worse is that their love is in harmony with Nature, whereas her's was not (another indirect reference to incest):

PHAEDRA: Alas! They hid it not, the well-pleas'd Sun
 With all his Beams surveyed their guiltless Flame;
 Glad Zephyrs wafted their untainted Sighs,
 And Ida eccho'd their endearing Accents.
 While I, the Shame of Nature, hid in Darkness,
 Far from the balmy Air and cheering Light,
 Prest down my Sighs, and dry'd my falling Tears,
 Search'd Retreat to mourn, and watch'd to grieve.⁸²

But Lycon again encourages the queen to act and capture Hippolitus ('snatch the Traytor from your Rival's Arms'⁸³) and Phaedra relents, though acutely aware that what she is doing is wrong ('Now they expose my Weakness and my Crimes: | Now to the sporting Crowd they tell my Follies'⁸⁴).

Hippolitus is thus captured and brought before the Queen, where they argue over the Prince's character and whether or not he has done anything wrong. As the Queen and Prince argue, an angry crowd amasses outside and Lycon again pledges to defend the Queen should they try to capture her. At this point Ismena is also brought in and the Queen's rage returns, mad with the idea of vengeance against her rival. This passage is an interesting alternative to the family history motif especially present in Seneca and Racine. Smith's Phaedra here does not deny or lament her divine ancestry, but channels it:

PHAEDRA: Now all the Spirits of my Godlike Race
 Enflame my Soul, and urge me on to Vengeance;
 Arsamnes, Minos, Jove, th' avenging Sun
 Inspire my Fury, and demand my Justice.

⁸²Smith (1729), 32-33.

⁸³Smith (1729), 33.

⁸⁴Smith (1729), 33.

Oh! you shall have it; though, Minos, shalt applaud it;
 Yes, thou shalt copy it in their Pains below.
 Gods of Revenge arise. - He comes! He comes!
 And shoots himself thro' all my kindling Blood:
 I have it here. - now base perfidious Wretch,
 No sigh and weep, and tremble in they turn.
 Yes, your Ismena shall appease my Vengeance;
 Ismena dies: And thou her pitying Lover
 Doom'd her to Death. - Though too shalt see her bleed;
 See her convulsive Pangs, and hear her dying Groans:
 Go, glut thy Eyes with thy adored Ismena,
 And laugh at dying Phaedra.⁸⁵

Here we see a defiant, powerful Phaedra, in the tradition of women such as Nourmahal in Dryden's *Aureng-Zebe*, and Seneca's Medea, while at the same time the incestuous passion within the ruling family has clearly disrupted the stability of the city, with crowds amassing questioning the Queen's legitimacy to rule.

Phaedra at first chooses to blame the woman ('I see 'twas Woman all. And Woman's Fraud should meet with Woman's Vengeance'⁸⁶), but she is also hesitant, recognising her own love in Ismena's. At this point, the Queen returns to her senses, remembering her old chaste self, the Phaedra of Euripides:

PHAEDRA: Am I that Phaedra? No. - Another Soul
 Informs my alter'd Frame. Cou'd else Ismena
 Provoke my Hatred, yet deserve my Love?
 Aid me, ye Gods, support my sinking Glory,
 Restore my Reason, and confirm my Virtue.
 Yet, is my Rage unjust? Then, why was Phaedra
 Rescu'd for Torment, and Preserv'd for Pain?
 Why did you raise me to the heights of Joy,
 Above the Wreck of Clouds and Storms below,
 To dash and break me on the Ground for ever?⁸⁷

Hippolitus is moved by Phaedra's change of state ('O, dismal State! My bleeding Heart relents, | And all my Thoughts dissolve in tenderest Pity'⁸⁸), but not enough to make him become her lover. He'd rather show his affection by commanding her armies and bringing her an empire. Thus the political order would be restored not by giving into

⁸⁵Smith (1729), 36.

⁸⁶Smith (1729), 36.

⁸⁷Smith (1729), 38.

⁸⁸Smith (1729), 39.

incestuous passion, as Lycon might have hoped, but instead by Hippolitus relinquishing his role within the line of succession and instead becoming a military leader.

Unfortunately for Phaedra there is too much at stake for her to accept anything less than Hippolitus himself: 'For your dear Sake I've lost my darling Honour; | For you, but now I gave my Soul to Death.'⁸⁹ Hippolitus simply cannot understand and once again refuses the Queen. This is sufficient to send Phaedra over the edge in her despair and resolve to end her 'ignoble Passion' with death. The Queen takes Hippolitus' sword and attempts to stab herself. However, before she can do so, Lycon returns, just in time not only to snatch the sword away but also to inform the Queen and her stepson that Theseus is alive and has returned. Phaedra flees with Lycon, who retains the sword for future use ('This [the sword] may do Service yet'⁹⁰), and Hippolitus remains on stage to meet his father. There is great affection between the two men, and Theseus speaks of his 'Father's Fondness' for his son,⁹¹ but the Act ends reminiscent of Theseus' arrival in Euripides, with a sense of foreboding that all is not right, based on Hippolitus' unusual behaviour, when the king suggests they visit Phaedra:

THESEUS: Why tremble thus my Limbs! Why faints my Heart?
 Why am I thrill'd with Fear, till now unknown?
 Where's now the Joy, the Extasy, and Transport,
 That warm'd my Soul, and urged me on to Phaedra?
 O! had I never loved her, I'd been blest.⁹²

It is worth noting the verbal echo here to Phaedra's effusive description of the love she felt for Hippolitus on her wedding day (to Theseus),⁹³ where she also uses the phrase 'Extasy and Transport'. Obviously Theseus remembers his wedding day quite differently from his wife!

ACT IV begins with Lycon alone, and Phaedra enters shortly thereafter, still resolved on death. Lycon reminds the Queen of her empire and her child as motivations for living, and recommends that she try and woo Theseus:

⁸⁹Smith (1729), 39.

⁹⁰Smith (1729), 41.

⁹¹Smith (1729), 42.

⁹²Smith (1729), 43.

⁹³Smith (1729), 10.

PHAEDRA: Impossible! What woo him with these Eyes
 Still wet with Tears that flow'd? - But not for Theseus.
 This Tongue so us'd to sound another Name?
 What! Take him to my Arms! Oh awful Juno!
 Touch, Love, Caress him! While my wandering Fancy
 On other Objects strays? A lewd Adultress
 In the chaste Bed? And in the Father's Arms,
 (Oh horrid Thought! Oh execrable Incest!)
 Ev'n in the Father's Arms embrace the Son?⁹⁴

It is only with the return of her husband that her previously unnamed, yet horrible crime, finally gets its true name: 'Oh execrable Incest!'. Phaedra is worried now that as soon as Theseus sees her, her crimes will be revealed, and she also worries that Hippolitus will reveal her secret to his father. Lycon therefore suggests, again playing the Nurse figure, that she accuse Hippolytus before he can accuse her. Phaedra is hesitant, but Theseus arrives before she can decide. Lycon emphasises the consequences of not doing so and offers to act on the Queen's behalf. The Queen's departing words give him license to do so: 'Do your resolve, for Phaedra can do nothing'.⁹⁵

Lycon reveals that Phaedra has been 'wronged' and Theseus immediately wants revenge. Lycon continues to bait the king by saying how he fears 'her monstrous Grief will end her'.⁹⁶ Theseus again wants to rush to her aid, but Lycon (again the Nurse figure) supplicates to beg him to stay. It is finally revealed that Hippolitus is the one who wronged her. Lycon claims he has loved her since the marriage, which Theseus sees as explaining why he was banished. Theseus still wants proof, which Lycon of course has (even though he plays a bit affronted at not being trusted on his word alone):

LYCON: ... Bear Witness, Heav'n!
 With what Reluctance I produce this Sword,
 This fatal Proof against th' unhappy Prince,
 Lest it should work your Justice to his Ruin,
 And prove he aim'd at Force, as well as Incest.⁹⁷

The scene is reminiscent of Seneca (in fact line 729 is referenced in a marginal annotation and underline), but Smith's text now becomes full of incest references. Hippolitus

⁹⁴Smith (1729), 45.

⁹⁵Smith (1729), 48.

⁹⁶Smith (1729), 50.

⁹⁷Smith (1729), 53.

enters and is referred to by Theseus as 'th' incestuous villain.'⁹⁸ An argument between father and son ends with another twist on the mythological references (Minos is a relation of Phaedra's in Seneca's version) and another incest reference:

THESEUS: Was Minos then thy Pattern? And did Minos,
The Judge of Hell, and Oracle of Earth,
Did he inspire Adultery, Force, and Incest?⁹⁹

Ismena enters just in time to witness Hippolitus' shock at this accusation:

HIPPOLITUS: ... Amazement! Incest? –
THESEUS: Incest with Phaedra, with thy Mother Phaedra!
HIPPOLITUS: This Charge so unexpected, so amazing,
So new, so strange, impossible to Thought,
Stuns my astonish'd Soul, and ties my Voice.¹⁰⁰

Theseus presents the sword as evidence. Hippolitus tries to get his father to see reason, without revealing the truth he knows. But Theseus, as in Euripides, hears none of it.

Ismena attempts to defend Hippolitus by saying that he is pledged to her, which Hippolitus confirms, but this doesn't exactly help, as Ismena (like the Aricie character in Racine, on whom she is based) is foe to Theseus. Theseus asks Cratander to execute Hippolitus, and Ismena begs to be able to share his fate. All tenderness has gone from Theseus and he has turned cruel, saying: 'Slaves, Villains, tear her from him, cut her Arms off.'¹⁰¹ All leave except Ismena, who begs the walls to tell the truth and exonerate Hippolitus. ACT V starts with Phaedra lashing out against Lycon for revealing her secret to Theseus. Lycon, like other Nurses before him, claims that it was all done to preserve the Queen's life: '... Such was my Zeal, so much I lov'd my Queen, | I broke through all, to save the Life of Phaedra.'¹⁰² Theseus then enters, having been summoned by Phaedra, who is now ready to make her final confession.

Smith presents the King again with an uncharacteristic tenderness to his character, and a strong love for his wife:

⁹⁸Smith (1729), 54.

⁹⁹Smith (1729), 57.

¹⁰⁰Smith (1729), 57.

¹⁰¹Smith (1729), 62.

¹⁰²Smith (1729), 63-64.

THESEUS: Dost thou at last repent? Oh lovely Phaedra!
 At last with equal Ardour meet my Vows:
 O dear-bought Blessing! Yet I'll not complain,
 Since now my sharpest Grief is all o'er-paid,
 And only heightens Joys. – Then haste, my Charmer,
 Let's feast our famish'd Souls with amorous Riot,
 With fiercest Bliss atone for our Delay,
 And in a moment love the Age we've lost.¹⁰³

Phaedra still spurns her husband, and Theseus quickly turns to blame Hippolitus, again emphasising the crime of incest, here mixed with the theme of Nature:

THESEUS: Oh most abandon'd Villain!
 Oh lasting Scandal to our Godlike Race!
 That could contrive a Crime so foul as Incest!

Phaedra can hardly bear to think of the crime, which she knows is on her head, not Hippolitus', and which she (and Smith) have been so reluctant to name as such until her husband's return:

PHAEDRA: Incest! Oh name it not! –
 The very mention shakes my inmost Soul:
 The Gods are startled in their peaceful Mansions,
 And Nature sickens at the shocking Sound.
 Thou brutal Wretch! Thou execrable Monster!
 To break thro' all the Laws that early flow
 From untaught Reason, and distinguish Man,
 Mix like the senseless Herd with bestial Lust,
 Mother and Son preposterously wicked!
 To banish from thy Soul the Reverence due
 to Honour, Nature, and the genial Bed,
 And injure one so great, so good as Theseus!¹⁰⁴

Here Phaedra shows some tenderness for her husband, and feels responsible for the hurt she has caused. However Theseus still cannot see that the crimes she describes are her own. In fact, he can hardly believe that she would be capable of such a thing, seeing her as totally pure and innocent.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Smith (1729), 65.

¹⁰⁴Smith (1729), 66-67.

¹⁰⁵THESEUS: What Crimes couldst thou commit? Or what Reproaches
 Cou'd Innocence so pure as Phaedra's fear?
 Oh, thou'rt the chastest Matron of thy Sex,

It is only after a Messenger arrives to announce that Hippolitus is dead that Phaedra finally reveals his innocence:

PHAEDRA: Cou'dst thou not see Hippolitus was guiltless?
 THESEUS: Guiltless! Oh all ye Gods! What can this mean?
 PHAEDRA: Mean! That the Guilt is mine, that virtuous Phaedra,
 The Maid's Example, and the Matron's Theme,
 With bestial Passion, woo'd your loathing Son;
 And when deny'd, with impious Accusation,
 Sully'd the Lustre of his shining Honour;
 Of my own Crimes accused the faultless Youth,
 And with ensnaring Wiles destroy'd that Virtue,
 I try'd in vain to shake.¹⁰⁶

Here Phaedra turns Theseus' own portrayal of her back at him, destroying her husband's image of her to reveal that Hippolitus is the guiltless and virtuous one. However, she continues, acutely conscious of her range of horrible crimes, including, and culminating in incest.

PHAEDRA: What am I? What indeed, but one more black
 Than Earth, or Hell e're bore! O horrid Mixture
 Of Crimes, and Woes, of Parricide, and Incest;
 Perjury, Murther! To arm the erring Father
 Against the guiltless Son! O impious Lycon!
 In what a Hell of Woes thy Arts have plung'd me.¹⁰⁷

Theseus first focuses his rage against Lycon, but then at Phaedra directly, again highlighting her most horrific of crimes:

THESEUS: Oh impious Phaedra!
 Incestuous Fury! Execrable Murth'ress!
 Is there Revenge on Earth, or Pain in Hell,
 Can Art invent, or boiling Rage suggest,
 Ev'n endless Torture, which thou shalt not suffer?¹⁰⁸

The fairest Pattern of excelling Vertue.
 Our latest Annals shall record thy Glory,
 The Maid's Example, and the Matron's Theme:
 Each skilful Artist shall express thy Form,
 In animated Gold (Smith (1729), 67).

¹⁰⁶Smith (1729), 69-70.

¹⁰⁷Smith (1729), 70.

¹⁰⁸Smith (1729), 71.

Phaedra at this point reveals she has already taken poison and is well on her way to death.

The Act then descends into a series of angry outrages and suicide attempts. Theseus lashes out at Lycon for orchestrating the events that led to his son's death. Phaedra, like her Senecan counterpart (and indeed there is an annotation in the margin to Seneca line 1170) threatens to pursue Hippolytus even beyond her death, in the underworld.¹⁰⁹ Death will provide no resolution for Phaedra, who expects to continue her unfulfilled desire, and jealousy, in the afterlife. She is again acutely aware of her own crimes, referring to herself as 'monstrous' and 'accurst' and expecting to pay for her crimes in death. Theseus also expresses desire to commit suicide, and Phaedra, in an unexpected and perverse moment of companionship with her husband, encourages them to go together. However, in her near-death madness, Phaedra mistakes Theseus for Lycon and attempts to stab him – in doing so, she stabs herself and dies.

Witnessing his wife's death, Theseus decides to live on, as Hippolitus requested, and at this point Ismena enters, entirely unaware of Hippolitus' death. Witnessing her love, Theseus is moved to Ismena's cause (as in Racine, Theseus is reconciled with Aricie after Hippolyte's death).¹¹⁰ Ismena offers to stab herself, as she does not want to live without Hippolitus. However, in a surprise twist, Hippolitus enters and stops her. Both Ismena and Theseus are overjoyed when it turns out that the Prince faked his death and demanded to be brought before the King. Theseus gives Hippolitus and Ismena his blessing, and both lovers remember Phaedra with pity and kindness.

HIPPOLITUS: O! had not Passion fully'd her Renown,
None e're on Earth had shone with equal Lustre;
So glorious liv'd, or so lamented dy'd!
Her Faults were only Faults of raging Love,
Her Virtues all her own.

...

ISMENA: Unhappy Phaedra!
Was there no other way, ye pitying Pow'rs,
No other Way to crown Ismena's Love?
Then must I ever mourn her cruel Fate,

¹⁰⁹Smith (1729), 73.

¹¹⁰Smith (1729), 75.

And in the midst of my triumphant Joy,
Ev'n in my Hero's Arms confess some Sorrow.¹¹¹

The play therefore closes with a happy and hopeful resolution, with the survival of its hero, and, arguably, one of its heroines, and fond memories, despite her horrific crimes, of the Queen, even if she may not have deserved such forgiveness.

This happy ending anticipates the change of taste in the late eighteenth century, where incest dramas became less popular and more problematic in England in particular. An adaptation of the *Oedipus Rex* by John Savill Faucit, staged in 1821 at the Royal West London Theatre, provides a strong example of the way in which treatment of the incest theme had changed by the start of the nineteenth century: 'What is significant here in Faucit's version is that the 'English' Oedipus has been restored to the stage after some time of absence. But, in accordance with modern taste, there is no reunion between the incestuous couple after their realization of the truth of their marriage.'¹¹² And, as we shall see in the next section, this tendency towards a happy ending was particularly popular in opera.

This section's close reading of Smith's drama has also demonstrated that threads from incest drama's heyday in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are still present here in the early eighteenth century, albeit in a subtler manner – the political connotations and concerns around succession as well as the defiant female lead who celebrates rather than being ashamed of her desire. And Smith does not shy away from the incestuous nature of Phaedra's desire for her stepson, particularly in the second half of the play. This is not to say that the play is not clunky at times, but this disjunction seems precisely to reflect this tension between the recent popularity of incest dramas and a sudden shift in taste, making Smith's Phaedra both defiant and chaste, at one and the same time, in order for his play to be a success.

¹¹¹Smith (1729), 77.

¹¹²Hall and Macintosh (2005), 240-2.

2.3 Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie*

In addition to Racine's *Phèdre*, there were a number of adaptations of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition in Europe in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The introduction of a love interest for Hippolytus can be traced back to Puget de la Serre's *Amours de Diane e Hyppolite*, where the goddess Diana is the one who loves Hippolytus, and Phaedra is jealous of that love.¹¹³ Some of these early dramas managed to shy away from the idea of incest, attempting to legitimise Phaedra's love for Hippolytus by making her not married to Theseus, but engaged to him and doubting her choice.¹¹⁴ Racine's *Phèdre* of 1677, as a result, represented quite a departure from the more fanciful and conservative versions of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition that preceded his own.

Another important precursor in the background to Rameau's opera is the Italian *Fedra incoronata*, first presented in Munich in 1662 by Ferdinand Maria and his wife to celebrate the birth of their son Maximilian, with a libretto by Pietro Paolo Bissari.¹¹⁵ Wendy Heller describes the plot as follows: 'The plot focuses primarily on the loves of Theseus (Teseo), ending with his rejection of the Amazon Antiope (Antiopa) – who is in turn loved by Solois (Soloonte) – in favour of Phaedra (Fedra). It also includes the death (and resurrection) of Hippolytus (Ippolito).'¹¹⁶ Bissari's *Fedra incoronata* has a number of features shared to some extent with Rameau's version (again as described

¹¹³Mills (2002), 115. Cf. H.D.'s adaptation, *Hippolytus Temporizes*, where Hippolytus is in love with Artemis, discussed in §3.3.

¹¹⁴Mills (2002) cites two examples: Gabriel Gilbert's *Hyppolite ou le Garçon Insensible* (1646) where Hippolytus loves Phaedra and Phaedra is in an unhappy engagement to Theseus, who is suspected of numerous affairs; and Mathieu Bidar's *Hippolyte* (1675) where Phaedra loves Hippolytus, he loves another woman named Cyane, and Hippolytus tries to encourage Phaedra to marry Theseus who loves her deeply. These plays do still end in Hippolytus' destruction, even if Phaedra's false accusation of rape does not fit in very well with the reconfigurations of the plot (Mills (2002), 115-16).

¹¹⁵Heller (2010), 76-7.

¹¹⁶Heller (2010), 77. Heller also discusses Bissari's potential source material. Although his only acknowledged source is Plutarch, Heller argues that the insertion of the story of Hippolytus' exile belies the influence of other source material beyond Plutarch's Life of Theseus. One prominent influence is likely to have been Ovid's *Heroides*, 'a work that was widely disseminated in early modern Italy and that had influenced the construction of a large number of female characters in early opera'. She also mentions Seneca's *Phaedra*, which 'was probably more influential than Euripides' play in the Italian theatrical tradition, as it had been widely disseminated in Italy through Lodovico Dolce's translation.' Heller also mentions other Italian versions that Bissari would have no doubt been familiar with, such as *La Fedra* of Francesco Bozza (1578), Vincenzo Iacobilli's *L'Hippolito* (1601) and the *L'Hippolito redevivo* (1659), although there is no evidence the final work was ever performed (79).

by Heller): a number of different gods and goddesses are featured as characters in the play (Bissari's Fedra opens with a prologue including Giove, Giunone, Venere, Bellona, Apollo, Neptuno, Minerva, Vulcano); a conversation between Teseo and his father Nettuno (Neptune); Teseo's descent into the underworld with his friend Peritoo (Pirithous) to rescue Proserpina; the death and rescue/resurrection of Ippolito; Ippolito's devotion to Diana.¹¹⁷ Bissari's libretto was also characterised by comic elements, using a comic quasi-Nurse figure, Ferebea, as the one who attempts to seduce Ippolito (disguised as Fedra). Heller summarises this shift in dramatic elements as follows:

Bissari splits Fedra into two women. Ferebea, the comic character, becomes the embodiment of sensual passion, allowing the highborn Fedra to remain virtuous and innocent, unaware of the sins committed by her counterpart. She is thus left to lament in high tragic fashion, without assuming any of the guilt of her lower-class counterparts. The death of Ippolito, which should be the ultimate tragic result of Fedra's desire, becomes an opportunity for even more excess in the visual realm. This is not merely a tragedy with a happy ending: instead, Bissari uses the substance of tragedy to invent something entirely different.¹¹⁸

There was also Domenico Lalli's *L'Ippolito*, which followed his *Edippo* of 1729. Lalli was a Neapolitan-born librettist, active mostly in Venice, and a close competitor of the French *tragédie* and of Voltaire in particular (who also wrote an *Oedipe* in Paris in 1718).¹¹⁹ Strohm describes the features of Lalli's libretto as follows:

... a *tragedia per musica* based on Racine's *Phèdre* and Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Whereas in the earlier libretto [for the *Edippo*] the poet forgoes any theoretical explanation, using the preface ('Argomento dell'ante Fatto') only for a detailed account of the prehistory of the action, in the preface for *L'Ippolito* he carefully explains his departures from Euripides and justifies the 'almost total' exoneration of Fedra, the honourable character of Ippolito, and the happy ending of reconciliation. In fact, what had not been achieved before, nor indeed envisaged, was a happy ending for such an arch-tragedy – without improbability. Not only demonstrations of virtuosic dramaturgy were required (although this was clearly a common interest to Voltaire and Lalli), but even more an 'aesthetic of effect', by which Lalli could rescue a modern European moral from the ruins of ancient drama.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷Heller (2010), 80-81.

¹¹⁸Heller (2010), 84.

¹¹⁹Strohm (2010), 171.

¹²⁰Strohm (2010), 173.

And so it is against the background of this rivalry between French and Italian operatic traditions, coupled with the preference for some kind of happy ending or comic elements, that Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* emerges.

Rameau's dominance of the French Baroque opera scene is emphasised in the journals describing events at the Paris Opéra. The playwright Charles Collé writes as follows:

It is said that M. d'Argenson, who currently has overall responsibility for the Opéra, explained to the directors ... his wish that they should stage no more than one Rameau opera per year. The composer's supporters are furious at this order; they are declaring that the minister wants to cause the downfall of the Opéra, which this great genius has sustained single-handed, so as to remove it from the present directors and give it to his protégés, Rebel, Francoer and Jélyotte. Rameau, they add, is cut to the quick: he swears that he will produce no more work and that he has even withdrawn a *tragédie* by himself and Cahusac, which he had provided for the winter season.¹²¹

Rameau came to opera late in life, at the age of 50, but the *Hippolyte et Aricie* of 1733 secured his popularity. Pellegrin's libretto was also influential for subsequent 18th-century Phaedra operas in France and Italy. Operas such as *Ippolito ed Aricia* by Frugoni and Traetta (1759) and *Fedra* by Salvioni and Paisiello (1788) rely more on Pelligrin's version than any earlier source material from Euripides to Racine.¹²²

Hippolyte et Aricie was first performed at the Académie Royale de Musique de Paris on Thursday 1 October 1733. It had a cast of ten women and twenty men in the chorus, plus twenty-seven dancers, including some of the most celebrated performers of the time. Although there is not much information on the first production (in contrast to later revivals), there were twenty-one performances in the first run, with Rameau revising as he went along to such an extent that a second edition had to be printed. The first run was a genuine success with several partial revisions at court and staged productions in the provincial royal opera houses. The librettist, the Abbé Simon-Joseph Pellegrin, was reportedly so enamoured of Rameau's work that, even though he agreed to write the libretto because he needed the money, he tore up the promissory

¹²¹As quoted in Wood and Sadler (2000), 17.

¹²²Brown and Ograjensek (2010), 43, note 49.

note after the first rehearsal.¹²³ It was not a universal success, however, and Rameau's innovative new style had its difficulties. Audiences were used to more traditional music and the composer found himself under pressure to speed up the action as his audiences were not ready for so much music. One review commented that there was 'enough [music] for several good operas' and eventually Rameau was forced to cut two tableau scenes. It was also the case that some of his singers were not skilled enough to cope with the new style.¹²⁴

Rameau also cut out some of his more daring modulations, and described his compromises as follows: 'we would need docile musicians willing to understand one another, who could accept the music with all the patience that a novelty of this kind demands for ears that are not at all accustomed to it.'¹²⁵ An early review of the opera in the *Mercure de France* also mentions the music, describing it as a little difficult to perform but not to such an extent that it hindered the performance. Mlle Petitpas, who played Diana's High Priestess, was praised for her voice like a nightingale, and the review concludes: 'the composer has written music that is both masculine and harmonious; new in style.'¹²⁶

In his preface, Simon-Joseph Pellegrin tells his reader that his libretto is loosely based on two Hippolytus works by Euripides and Seneca, and above all on Racine's *Phèdre*. His poetry has an elegiac tone, focussing on the love story between Hippolytus and Aricie, leaving the tragic elements to Theseus and Phaedra. Phaedra's incestuous love for Hippolytus is still the main obstacle, leading both to their deaths, although in this version Hippolytus manages to come back for a happy ending due to a change in fortune. One of Pellegrin's chief difficulties was how to save Hippolytus in order to conform to the happy ending demanded by his 1730s audience without 'contravening the rule according to which a lower divinity may not destroy the work wrought by a superior divinity.'¹²⁷ In the end, Pellegrin allows fate to trump Neptune and avoid

¹²³Bouissou (2002), xxxiv-v.

¹²⁴Bouissou (2002), xxxv-xxxviii.

¹²⁵Bouissou (2002), xxxix.

¹²⁶Bouissou (2002), xxxix-xl.

¹²⁷Simon Goldhill, in his book on Victorian culture and classical antiquity, quotes the French librettist Du Roullet on the importance of happy endings: 'Du Roullet was clear that this was the only

Hippolytus' death. He also expands the Theseus character, using the scene of him in the underworld to develop his human qualities.¹²⁸

The opera opens with a chorus of Nymphs of Diane, and the goddess herself, in the forest. The charms, and dangers, of love are discussed before L'Amour herself descends from the heavens. The rivalry between Artemis and Aphrodite is here brought to life, with Diane immediately seeking to banish L'Amour from her sacred grove: 'Va, fuis, ton seul aspect vient redoubler ma haine.'¹²⁹ The goddesses' debate, however, is interrupted by the entrance of Jupiter with a crash of thunder. Jupiter agrees that the force of Amour should reign one day per year, much to Diane's dismay ('Quelle honte!') and Amour's vindication ('Quelle victoire!'). In accepting her defeat, Diane makes first mention of the two protagonists, vowing to protect them:

Nymphes, aux lois du sort il faut que j'obèsse :
 Je mets dès aujourd'hui vos coeurs en liberté ;
 Je ne dois pas, pourtant, abaisser ma fierté
 Jusqu'à voir une fête à l'Amour si propice.
 Hippolyte, Aricie, exposés à périr,
 Ne fondent que sur moi leur dernière espérance ;
 Contre une injuste violence, C'est à moi de les secourir.¹³⁰

This prologue emphasises the love story between Hippolyte and Aricie, and as yet no mention has been made of Phèdre. The prologue closes with Amour leading a dance, accompanied by a Chorus of lovers, and singing that familiar image of the flames of love: 'Que son flambeau, s'allume aux flammes de l'Amour.'¹³¹

The first act begins with Aricie alone on stage at the temple of Diane (and it is again evidence of her prominence as a character that she appears before the ill-fated queen). The princess has come, unwillingly, to make a vow of chastity at the temple of Diane, but before she can do so Hippolyte enters and the two sing a duet. They first

satisfactory conclusion to the tragedy. "It is essential in tragic-opera that the dénouement is happy," he wrote. . . . There is also a principle of the emotions involved in this. Since "the soul is affected in the extreme and disturbed" by opera's potent combination of words and music, it is crucial to end with "an agreeable celebration, which distracts and consoles it" '(Goldhill (2011), 102).

¹²⁸Bouissou (2002), xlii-xliii.

¹²⁹Bouissou (2002), LIII.

¹³⁰Bouissou (2002), LIV.

¹³¹Bouissou (2002), LV.

sing separately, uncertain of each other's feelings, but come together in the end unable to deny the charms of Love, singing together:

Tu règues sur nos coeurs, comme dans nos forêts ;
 Pour combattre l'Amour, tu nous prêtes des armes.
 Mais, quand la vertu même en vient lancer les traits,
 Qui peut résister à ses charmes?¹³²

At this point a chorus of priestesses enters to dance and sing about the dangers of love and the value of innocence. After the chorus finishes, Phèdre enters and is quickly angered to find out that Aricie is reconsidering her vow of chastity to Diane. Phèdre then turns to accuse Hippolyte of disobeying his father's wishes and promises that he will pay for his crime (the line 'La vertu quelquefois sert de prétexte au crime'¹³³ ominously foreshadows the true crime to come). The music becomes increasingly dramatic, with Phèdre threatening Hippolyte over and over again with 'Tremblez' and her speech finishes with a fanfare of trumpets as a group of warriors enter threatening to destroy the altar.¹³⁴

Before any damage can be done, however, the goddess Diane enters with her priestesses, heralded by her father Jupiter's thunder. She speaks first to Phèdre and then to Aricie, at which point Hippolyte and Aricie beg her forgiveness. Diane agrees to protect them, seeing their virtue rather than their crime: 'Votre vertu m'est chère, | Et c'est au crime seul que je dois ma colère'.¹³⁵ The goddess retreats into her temple, and Hippolyte and Aricie leave together, leaving Phèdre on stage with her nurse Oenone, to reveal the true reasons behind her anger at the young lovers from the previous scene – seeing them together has inflamed her jealousy and she rages for vengeance against them:

Quoi ! la terre et le ciel contre moi sont armés !
 Ma rivale m'échappe ! Elle suit Hippolyte !

¹³²Bouissou (2002), LVI.

¹³³Bouissou (2002), LVIII.

¹³⁴Stage direction: '*Bruit de trompettes. Des Guerriers entrent, et vont briser l'autel*' (Bouissou (2002), LVIII).

¹³⁵Bouissou (2002), LVIII.

Ah ! plus je vois leurs coeurs l'un pour l'autre enflammés,
Plus mon jaloux transport s'irrite.¹³⁶

This scene was significantly revised in the later version of the drama, where a few final words from Aricie replace two additional scenes – the entrance of Arcas and a final exchange between Phèdre and Oenone. Arcas comes with the terrible news that the king (Thésée) has descended to the underworld, most probably to his death. This news, of course, changes the stakes for Phèdre's love for her stepson; however, interestingly, it is Phèdre, not Oenone, who makes this point, although she quickly dismisses the thought:

Quand mon amour seroit sans crime,
En seroit-il moins sans espoir ?
En ! comment me flatter... Non, il n'est pas possible...¹³⁷

Oenone, however, persists and Phèdre is forced to admit that this is one small hope that might yet prolong her life, although it all depends on whether Hippolyte will return her affection.

Act II finds Thésée in the underworld (*l'entrée des enfers*) being tortured by Tisiphone, near death and held responsible for the transgressions of his friend. Pluto enters in the second scene with a chorus of Furies (*Divinités Infernales*) to hear Thésée defend his actions after which he and Tisiphone exit and the chorus sings and dances a short hymn to Pluto's power. Thésée returns with Tisiphone, still unable to locate his friend. Tisiphone promises that the two will only be united in death ('La Mort, la seule Mort a droit de vous unir'¹³⁸). Having found no favour from the God of the Underworld, Thésée calls upon his own ancestor Neptune for assistance. The chorus of Furies are quick to remind him that to descend to the Underworld is one thing, but to return another matter entirely, however, they are proven incorrect as Mercury enters, sent by Neptune from above. Scene 5 begins with a dialogue between Mercury and Pluto. Pluto feels bound to punish Thésée for his and his friend's transgressions, but in the end gives in and releases Thésée from the Underworld to return with Mercury.

¹³⁶Bouissou (2002), LIX.

¹³⁷Bouissou (2002), LIX.

¹³⁸Bouissou (2002), LXI.

Act III is set in Thésée's palace and begins with Phèdre on stage alone. Again, the later revised version of the opera expands this scene and presents a more conflicted Queen, whereas the original 1733 version has the Queen much more hopeful, and includes an additional scene comprised of a short exchange between her and Oenone before Hippolyte enters:

SCÈNE 1. PHÈDRE

Phèdre: Espoir, unique bien d'une fatale flamme,
 Pour la première fois viens régner dans mon âme.
 Je sentirai mieux que jamais
 Quel est le prix du diadème,
 S'il attache sur moi les yeux de ce que j'aime ;
 Doux espoir, tu me le promets.

SCÈNE 2. PHÈDRE, OENONE

Phèdre: Eh bien ! viendra-t-il en ces lieux,
 Ce fatal ennemi que, malgré moi, j'adore ?
 Oenone: Hippolyte bientôt va paroître à vos yeux.
 Phèdre: Je tremble ; à quel aveu l'ardeur qui me dévore,
 Au mépris de ma gloire, enfin, va me forcer ?
 Il vient, dieux, par où commencer ?¹³⁹

The mention of the crown ('Quel est le prix du diadème') brings a political element into the exchange. Hippolyte enters to start the third scene, which follows in both versions, and respectfully addresses the Queen. However he makes the mistake of implying that he could be the object of the Queen's hatred ('un objet odieux'), to which the Queen reacts with some distress. Hippolyte only makes things worse when he offers to stand in as Father to the Queen's child ('À votre fils je tiendrai lieu de père') and ensuring the proper line of succession to Phèdre's legitimate child ('J'affirmerai son trône, et j'en donne ma foi'). At this point, Phèdre first makes hint of her inappropriate feelings for her stepson, offering him the throne and the mother, in addition to the son ('C'en est trop ; et le trône, et le fils, et la mère, | Je range tout sous votre loi'). Phèdre offers political power outside the line of succession, to the illegitimate son, via an incestuous relationship. Hippolyte, however, does not understand and inflames Phèdre's passion and anger even further by mentioning his love for Aricie ('Aricie est tout ce que j'aime'), saying he wants her, not the crown.¹⁴⁰ He thus prioritises his relationship with Aricie

¹³⁹Bouissou (2002), LXIII.

¹⁴⁰Bouissou (2002), LXIII.

over political power.

Phèdre and Hippolyte at this point launch into an agitated duet where Phèdre sings of her desire to harm Aricie against Hippolyte's pledge to defend her: 'Je ne hais rien tant sous les cieux | Que le sang que je veux répandre' versus 'Rien ne m'est si cher sous les cieux | Que le sang que je veux défendre' (this duet was cut in the 1757 version). Hippolyte is surprised at the extent of Phèdre's hatred and, in response to this, Phèdre more fully reveals her love, referring to Aricie as her rival. Hippolyte is so shocked by the revelation of his stepmother's unnatural, incestuous love (although he never uses this terminology) that he expects the heavens to strike Phèdre down:

Votre rivale ! je frémis,
Thésée est votre époux, et vous aimez son fils ?
Ah ! je me sens glacé d'une horreur sans égale.
Terribles ennemis des perfides humains,
Dieux si prompts autrefois à les réduire en poudre,
Qu'attendez-vous ? Lancez la foudre.
Qui la retient entre vos mains ?¹⁴¹

Realising Hippolyte's shock and horror at her revelation, Phèdre implores him to strike at her, as a hero would strike at a monster.¹⁴² Hippolyte is even more aghast at this suggestion, and so Phèdre, realising that Hippolyte hates her as much as she loves him ('Tu me hais autant que je t'aime') takes it upon herself to do the deed and grabs his sword.¹⁴³ As the two struggle, Thésée enters, much to the shock of all the characters. Thésée asks Phèdre for an explanation, but she is so ashamed she flees the stage, saying only: 'N'approchez plus de moi ; l'amour est outragé, | Que l'amour soit vengé.'¹⁴⁴

Thésée next turns to his son, who is equally unable to offer any explanation, and Hippolyte too shortly leaves the stage: 'Permettez que je me retire ; | Ou plutôt, que j'obtienne une exil éternel.' This leaves only Thésée and Oenone on the stage, and the King thus turns to the Nurse for an explanation. Oenone, in the interests of the

¹⁴¹Bouissou (2002), LXIV.

¹⁴²Rends-toi digne fils d'un héros
Qui de monstres sans nombre, a délivré la terre ;
Il n'en est échappé qu'un seul à sa fureur ;
Frappe, ce monstre est dans mon coeur (Bouissou (2002), LXIV). This kind of imagery will become particularly important in the post-modern adaptations discussed in Chapter 6.

¹⁴³Stage direction: '*Phèdre prend l'épée d'Hippolyte*'.

¹⁴⁴Bouissou (2002), LXIV.

Queen, accuses Hippolyte of raping the Queen. Thésée is distraught (crying out ‘Dieux ! achève’) and dismisses Oenone. Thésée attempts to process the information about his son’s crime against his wife, and ultimately decides that, despite the tie of blood relation, what Hippolyte has done makes him a monster: ‘ce sang qu’il trahit me parle en sa faveur ! | Non, non, dans un fils si coupable, | Je ne vois qu’un monstre effroyable ; | Qu’il ne trouve en moi qu’un vengeur.’¹⁴⁵ And so Thésée proceeds to call upon his ancestor Neptune, who recently rescued him from the Underworld, to curse and kill his guilty son. The sea becomes agitated as Thésée sings (stage direction *La mer s’agite*, reflected by a frenzied accompaniment in the violins) and dooms his son to die at the god’s hand. The Act ends with a dance and a song comparing Love to Neptune, and lovers to sailors who face storms at sea.

Hippolyte begins the Fourth Act, which is set back in the grove of Diana (though this time it is specified that this is also *situé sur le rivage de la mer*), alone on stage singing about how he has lost everything he loves in a single day. The line ‘Ah ! faut-il, en un jour, perdre tout ce que j’aime !’¹⁴⁶ is repeated three times in his song. Aricie then enters and sings an affectionate duet with Hippolyte (this scene is abridged in the later versions). Hippolyte will not reveal the real reason for his banishment out of respect for the Queen (‘La respect me force à me taire ; | J’offenserois le roi, Diane et tous les dieux.’¹⁴⁷). They sing together a prayer to Diane to bless their love. At this point a chorus of huntresses join the two lovers on stage and proceed to dance whilst encouraging the two lovers with the chorus ‘Amans, quelle est votre faiblesse ? | Voyez l’Amour, sans vous alarmer.’¹⁴⁸ A single hunter and a single huntress then lead a song and dance to celebrate the hunt. While they sing, the music, as when Thésée made his call to Neptune, becomes more frantic, especially in the strings, with the stage direction: *La mer s’agite : on en voit sortir un monstre horrible*. Hippolyte offers himself to the monster (‘Venez, qu’à son défaut je vous serve de guide’) and Ariciè, seeing him taken, exclaims ‘Hippolyte ne paroît pas. Je meurs,’ and faints

¹⁴⁵Bouissou (2002), LXV.

¹⁴⁶Bouissou (2002), LXVI.

¹⁴⁷Bouissou (2002), LXVII.

¹⁴⁸Bouissou (2002), LXVIII.

(stage direction: *Aricie tombe évanouié*). The chorus, picking up on Aricie's words, sing what becomes a refrain in the scene to come: 'Hippolyte n'est plus'.¹⁴⁹

At this point Phèdre enters, having been drawn out of the palace by the commotion, and is distraught to hear the chorus sing 'Hippolyte n'est plus', responding 'Il n'est plus ! ô douleur mortelle !'¹⁵⁰ Phèdre immediately takes responsibility for Hippolyte's death, singing a long and agitated lament:

Non, sa mort est mon seul ouvrage ;
 Dans les enfers, c'est par moi qu'il descend ;
 Neptune, de Thésée, a cru venger l'outrage ;
 J'ai versé le sang innocent.
 Qu'ai-je fait ! quels remords ! ciel ! j'entends le tonnerre.
 Quel bruit ! quels terribles éclats !
 Fuyons ; où me cacher ? Je sens trembler la terre ;
 Les enfers s'ouvrent sous mes pas.
 Tous les dieux conjurés, pour me livrer la guerre,
 Arment leurs redoutables bras.
 Dieux cruels, vengeurs implacables,
 Suspendez un courroux qui me glace d'effroi ;
 Ah ! si vous êtes équitables,
 Ne tonnez plus encore sur moi ;
 La gloire d'un héros que l'injustice opprime
 Vous demande un juste secours.
 Laissez-moi révéler à l'auteur de ses jours,
 Et son innocence et mon crime.¹⁵¹

Although she laments, we see here echoes of the defiant leading ladies of the previous centuries; she laments only for Hippolyte, she does not apologise for her incestuous desire, and calls to the gods similarly to Edmund Smith's Phaedra. The Act ends with the now familiar phrase from the chorus, pointing out that Phèdre's remorse is too little, too late, since 'Hippolyte n'est plus.'

The Fifth, and final, Act in the original 1733 version begins with two scenes that are removed from subsequent versions. Thésée first enters alone, having become aware by the Queen's death that it was Phèdre who had initiated the 'amour détestable', and that he is thus responsible for the death of his innocent son. At this point Neptune

¹⁴⁹Bouissou (2002), LXIX.

¹⁵⁰Bouissou (2002), LXIX.

¹⁵¹Bouissou (2002), LXIX-LXX.

enters to let the mourning Thésée know that his son is not in fact dead ('Va, ton fils n'est pas mort'), but Diane has intervened and saved his life ('Diane a pris soin de son sort'). We see in this scene a real tenderness in Thésée, like that at the close of Euripides' version, with phrases such as 'Ô mon fils, mon cher fils, je puis donc te revoir ?' and 'Au lieu d'un tendre embrassement, | Mon fils, reçois les vœux d'un trop coupable père' and 'Jouer de cette paix si charmante et si chère, | Que tu n'as pu trouver dans le sein paternel.'¹⁵²

In the 1733 version, Neptune and Thésée depart and the scene changes to a garden where we see Aricie on her own at first disorientated by her grief at the loss of her love (this scene begins the final act in subsequent versions). She is unable to appreciate the beauty of the garden: 'Sans Hippolyte, hélas ! rien ne sauroit me plaire.'¹⁵³ At this point Diane enters with the stage direction *Diane descend dans une gloire* and a chorus of shepherds and shepherdesses to tell Aricie that she has chosen to save Hippolyte's life. Diana dismisses the chorus of shepherds and shepherdesses and Hippolyte is brought on stage: *Les Zéphyrus amènent Hippolyte dans un char, dans le fond du théâtre*. The two lovers then sing a duet and the opera ends with a joyful chorus and dance.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined two contemporaneous adaptations of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition from the early eighteenth century. Both plays immediately followed a period, analysed at length by McCabe in his study of incest drama, where incest plays enjoyed great prominence, on the English stage in particular, but also in continental Europe. In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries both the Hippolytus and Oedipus myths inspired a number of incest dramas used to comment on a wide range of social, cultural and political issues of the time. In England, this period was crowned by the huge popularity of the plays by Beaumont and Fletcher and Dryden, amongst others; in France, Racine was the pinnacle against which all others were

¹⁵²Bouissou (2002), LXXI.

¹⁵³Bouissou (2002), LXXI.

measured. Something changed, however, in the early part of the eighteenth century. Beaumont and Fletcher and Dryden's plays became far less popular on the English stage, and new legislation brought in strict censorship, often bolstered by new middle-class sensibilities that made it far more difficult to perform dramas featuring incest.

Both Smith and Rameau's works are emblematic of this transition period – they are unabashedly about incestuous desire, with a strong Phaedra character unapologetic for her passion while at the same time determined to die because of it. They also raise the same kinds of political issues around succession and royal power that were raised in the incest dramas of the earlier period. At the same time, the drama is softened and sweetened for the changing tastes of contemporary audiences, featuring a legitimate love story between Hippolytus and a young woman (Ismena or Aricie), and happy endings where the hero is found not to have died and lives happily ever after with his true love, and reconciled to his father.

For many nineteenth-century scholars, Euripides was the ancient dramatist seen as most worthy of censorship, and many argued that his plays, if taken seriously, promoted violence, illicit passion and uncontrolled emotion. Michelini sums up the scholar and philosopher A.W. Schlegel's and his brother Friedrich's perspective on Euripides, whom both saw as degenerate and amoral when compared to the pinnacle of morality depicted in Sophocles:

[Euripides] emphasised passion as a means of stirring the emotions of his audience. Passion (*Leidenschaft*) is used by the Schlegels to suggest an emotionalism inappropriate to males, linking the moral unfitness of Euripidean work to its emphasis on female roles and erotic themes. The sudden fall from perfection into decadence (*Verfall*) is at one and the same time an artistic and a moral failure. It is because of Euripides' moral insufficiencies that his art lacks unity; and it was because of the moral corruption of the Athenian public that his art found favour.¹⁵⁴

This, however, does not entirely explain the notable gap in performances of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition throughout the nineteenth century, as Euripides' *Hippolytus* seems for the most part to have been spared the Schlegel's condemnation that they directed at his other plays. The story of the chaste young hero was for many of

¹⁵⁴Michelini (1987), 5-6.

Euripides' harshest 19th-century critics the exception that proved the rule. This play, in the characterisation of Hippolytus as a chaste devotee of the goddess Artemis, was perceived to advocate self-restraint (the Greek concepts of αἰδώς and σωφροσύνη), in contrast to Euripides' other plays (*Medea*, *Hecuba*, *Trojan Women* to name only a few), which were perceived as all about excess. So while A.W. Schlegel became famous for his incredibly harsh treatment of Euripides in general (he commented in one of his lectures that Euripides 'not only destroyed the exterior of tragedy, but also missed its entire meaning'¹⁵⁵), he actually had quite a sympathetic view of the *Hippolytus* in particular. He criticised Racine for focusing too much on the characterisation of Phaedra and too little on Hippolytus and his 'austere purity of a virginal soul.'¹⁵⁶ Of the final reconciliation scene at the end of Euripides' version, where Artemis resolves the conflict between Theseus and his son, Schlegel commented: 'I know of nothing at all, either in ancient or in modern tragedy, that is more touching'; and he translated the whole scene into French in his *Comparaison entre la Phédre de Racine et celle d'Euripide* of 1807.¹⁵⁷

Euripides also found sympathy in Christian scholarship, where especially the *Hippolytus* and *Bacchae* were seen as evidence that Euripides was rebelling against the polytheism of the Athenian culture in which he was writing and actually accepting and promoting, though perhaps not overtly, monotheistic views. John Keble, for example, saw the chastity of Hippolytus as 'foreshadowing Christ's promise that the pure in heart shall see God.'¹⁵⁸ Aeschylus and Sophocles were still seen by many as superior, even as religious thinkers, but at least a few Euripidean plays, the *Hippolytus* included, held an important place in the Christianising interpretation of Greek tragedy.

The *Hippolytus* was therefore subject to censorship not as another of Euripides' plays of unrestrained violence and passion, but particularly because of its incest theme. At the turn of the 19th century, incest, having been largely unenforced as a crime before, became a much more serious problem, and deemed inappropriate for production on

¹⁵⁵Behler (1986), 357.

¹⁵⁶Behler (1986), 363.

¹⁵⁷Behler (1986), 365.

¹⁵⁸Jenkyns (1980), 92.

stage. It was around 1808 that incest and parricide (two important themes in the *Oedipus*) became problematic.¹⁵⁹ And when the Lord Chamberlain made his decision to ban the *Oedipus Rex* from the English stage in the later part of the 19th century, it was incest that was his chief reason for doing so:

The association of Oedipus with Shelley's controversial play [*The Cenci*] was to become a major determinant in the Lord Chamberlain's refusal to license Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* for public performance on the professional stage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays denied Sophocles' tragedy a license 'on the ground that it was impossible to put on the stage in England a play dealing with incest.'¹⁶⁰

An editorial in *The Era* published in May of 1886 further elaborated:

It would not do (to take a parallel instance) to suppose that because *The Cenci* has been placed on the stage and listened to with attention, not to say avidity, by a mixed audience of old men, young men, and maidens, that our public fast in matters of morality had become sufficiently degraded to permit the sin of incest forming a common and acceptable motif for a modern drama.¹⁶¹

This was coupled with a strengthening of the legal position against incest at the beginning of the twentieth century, The Punishment of Incest Act of 1908, which made incest a criminal offence no longer policed by the ecclesiastical courts, as it had been since 1650.

This would not last, however, and as theatre censorship began to be challenged and subverted in the early decades of the 20th century, we begin to see a huge resurgence of plays within the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition. By the end of the 19th century, Euripides began to speak to audiences anew as the desire to understand the inner,

¹⁵⁹Hall and Macintosh (2005), 6. 1808 marked the beginning of a decline in popularity of Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus*, which had been regularly performed in London for well over 100 years from its premiere in 1678. Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus* became indistinguishable from Sophocles' version and Hall and Macintosh reference Sir Walter Scott's damning commentary on Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus* in a collected edition of Dryden's works: 'Distress which turns upon the involutions of unnatural or incestuous passion, carries with it something too disgusting for the sympathy of a refined age'. This marked the beginning of a more general squeamishness around incest drama, enforced by the Lord Chamberlain's Office, and affecting performances not only of Sophocles but also Dryden and Lee and Shelley's play *The Cenci* (see especially Hall and Macintosh (2005), 1-7).

¹⁶⁰Hall and Macintosh (2005), 6.

¹⁶¹As cited in Hall and Macintosh (2005), 530.

psychological, world of individuals became a major preoccupation. For example, the *Hippolytus*, and particularly the plight of Phaedra, drew the attention of Oscar Wilde. He recalled in *De Profundis* the ‘grace of sweet companionship, the charm of pleasant conversation, that *terpnon kakon* (pleasant evil) as the Greeks called it’,¹⁶² alluding to Phaedra’s famous speech in the *Hippolytus* (lines 373-430).

Alongside the increased censorship and related changes in legislation and popular taste that led to more caution around staging incest, there was also a dramatic change in operatic taste across the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, particularly in England, parallel with the reception of Rameau’s contemporary Christoph Willibald Gluck. Simon Goldhill describes a revival of Gluck’s *Orphée* in 1910, the night before the premiere of Strauss’ *Elektra* as follows:

The contrast between Gluck and Strauss was played out in the British press as a contrast in classicisms, in visions of the ancient world, as much as in musical styles. But after Strauss for fifty years and more Gluck was seen in Britain at least as epitomising an outmoded and rather boring, idealised view of the ancient world: white sheets and columns rather than blood and incest.¹⁶³

The shift in France was slightly slower, mainly stemming from the continuing prominence of the Racinean example. A revival of the *Orphée* by Gluck’s protégé Berlioz in 1859, for example, was popular in France but in England ‘failed to make any significant impact.’¹⁶⁴ Goldhill continues: ‘In contrast to Paris, where Racine had remained central to the repertoire, London found Gluck’s version of antiquity something to walk out of.’¹⁶⁵

The happy endings found in Smith and Rameau were no longer necessary or what the public wanted, as evidenced by Wagner’s rewrite of Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Aulide* in 1847.¹⁶⁶ And what was progressive in the eighteenth century became, in the face

¹⁶²As cited in Jenkyns (1980), 97.

¹⁶³Goldhill (2011), 90.

¹⁶⁴Goldhill (2011), 110.

¹⁶⁵Goldhill (2011), 110.

¹⁶⁶As Goldhill cites from Wagner’s autobiography: ‘Wagner particularly disliked that the relationship of Achilles and Iphigenia was turned “into a sentimental love affair,” and so he “completely changed the ending, with its inevitable marriage, to make it more consonant with Euripides’ play of the same name” ’ (Goldhill (2011), 113 and note 144).

of adaptations such as Strauss' *Elektra*, respectable and proper classicism, and then eventually dated, stale, and boring. As Goldhill summarises:

What had been disturbing, weeping, wrenching emotions for the eighteenth-century audience, now could be landed as restraint, propriety, and dignity to be set against the wildness, extremism, and sheer explosiveness of Strauss' hysterical heroine. . . . Strauss' *Elektra* killed Gluck. It turned Gluck into an image of traditional, conservative classicism – the anathema of contemporary thinking on art, which privileges the revolutionary, the transgressive, the provocative; it is a slur from which Gluck has struggled to emerge.¹⁶⁷

Although Goldhill does not specifically mention Rameau, he could equally be speaking of Gluck's French contemporary here, who has only recently been brought back into the public's attention. The resurgence of Hippolytus and Phaedra in the early twentieth century was primarily on the stage and, in fact, Rameau's is one of only a very small number of operatic versions within the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition.

¹⁶⁷Goldhill (2011), 122 and note 165.

Chapter 3

Psychoanalytical readings¹

This new drama ‘will attempt to transfer to dramatic art the illumination of those deep and vigorous and eternal processes of the human soul which the psychology of Freud and Jung has given us through study of the unconscious, striking to the heart of emotion and linking our commonest life today with the emanations of the primitive racial mind.’²

Oedipus the King became the play of the last few decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the famous tragic actor Jean Mounet-Sully took over the role of Oedipus at the Comédie-Française in 1881. Hall and Macintosh speak of the impact of this performance on the development of Freud’s psychoanalytical theory:

... there is some irony, although perhaps no coincidence, in the fact that it is France – the country best known for its championing of the collective over the individual in the political realm – that should have chosen to celebrate the embattled Greek hero, crushed through his own noble endeavour. Yet there is perhaps even greater irony in the fact that it was this French production that afforded that much more famous Austrian, Sigmund Freud, the opportunity to explore the individual psyche, just at the time when many of his compatriots were beginning to be wooed by the exponents of the ideology of the collective that was to take its most pernicious form in the first half of the twentieth century.³

The huge popularity of Mounet-Sully’s performances, as well as a subsequent produc-

¹Previous versions of this chapter were delivered as talks on two occasions, firstly at the Open University Classical Studies Department Work in Progress Day on 15 May 2014 and secondly at the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) Postgraduate Symposium on 29 June 2014. The final chapter has benefited from feedback at both events.

²Bogard (1988), 176.

³Hall and Macintosh (2005), 525-6.

tion of Sophocles' play by the Austrian director Max Reinhardt, which premiered in Munich in 1901 and then in London in 1912,⁴ coincided with and indeed significantly contributed to public discussion of theatre censorship in England. When W.B. Yeats established the Abbey Theatre in 1904, he noted, '*Oedipus the King* is forbidden in London. A censorship created in the eighteenth century by Walpole, because somebody has written against election bribery, has been distorted by a puritanism which is not the less an English invention for being a pretend hatred of vice and a real hatred of intellect. Nothing has suffered so many persecutions as the intellect, though it is never persecuted under its own name.'⁵ Gilbert Murray's translation of *Oedipus the King* was finally granted a licence in 1910⁶ and Reinhardt's production was staged at Covent Garden in January 1912, using the Murray translation.⁷ Such performances did not, however, open the flood gates for incest dramas on the British stage, as Hall and Macintosh note: '*Oedipus Tyrannos* may have been finally freed but the British stage was to remain under the shadow of the censor for another fifty years.'⁸

Adaptations within the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition provide, like the Oedipus plays, a fruitful area for the exploration of emergent psychoanalytical themes. To see the true impact of psychoanalysis on adaptation of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition, however, one must look to the American stage, or to the private circles of British poets and essayists who explored the themes in less populist media. In this chapter I discuss two adaptations that arose in a context heavily dominated by Freud's discoveries, Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and H.D.'s *Hippolytus Temporizes*, both written in 1925. Both O'Neill and H.D. have configured the Hippolytus tradition in a distinctly Oedipal framework: their Hippolytus figures see their lovers as quasi-maternal figures and also have a strongly antagonistic and competitive relationship with their fathers. In particular, I explore the connection that is made in both works between land, place, space and feminine, maternal figures and the resulting contrast

⁴Hall and Macintosh (2005), 522-3.

⁵Hall and Macintosh (2005), 535.

⁶Hall and Macintosh (2005), 538.

⁷Hall and Macintosh (2005), 539.

⁸Hall and Macintosh (2005), 541.

that is made between feminine and masculine spaces in both plays. This contrast amplifies the conflict between father, who sits distinctly outside the feminine space, and son, who is both part of and separate from the feminine space via his connection to and inability to escape from the maternal.

On Freud’s influence on Eugene O’Neill, the dramatist’s biographer Travis Bogard states: ‘Freud is used less for his themes than for his truth, a truth that had preceded Freud by millennia.’⁹ Artists like Eugene O’Neill and H.D., with their close proximity to, and, in the case of H.D., personal relationship with, Freud, were looking for stories with which to showcase the Freudian lens, just as Freud himself turned to Greek mythology to articulate his own theories about the human condition. For O’Neill and H.D., Hippolytus and Phaedra, rather than Oedipus, became their vehicle. This is a prime example of how creative receptions are able to enrich understanding of ancient source material and bring out latent themes in the story. In the case of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition, we have a particularly striking example of how creative writers often anticipate scholarly analysis by some considerable years. These two adaptations explore themes in the source material that do not appear in scholarship until nearly fifty years later, and it is this time-lapse to which I turn by way of introduction.

3.1 Psychoanalysis, Freud, and the ‘other’ incest drama

In the introduction to their edited collection *Classical Myth and Psychoanalysis: Ancient and Modern Stories of the Self*, Zajko and O’Gorman speak of the affinity between psychoanalysis and myth: ‘But psychoanalysis is not just similar to myth in the way it takes the form of storytelling which allows a truth to emerge, it also self-consciously appropriates myth and mythic *exempla* in order to make broader and bolder claims about humanity as a whole.’¹⁰ They continue: ‘Myth, as a psychological discourse which transcends times and cultures, may have seemed an obvious choice to the early psychoanalysts when they came to look for analogies for the experiences of their pa-

⁹Bogard (1988), 208.

¹⁰Zajko and O’Gorman (2013), 3.

tients.’¹¹ DuBois, in her essay in the same volume, speaks of the particular lens of psychoanalytical readings as follows: ‘As psychoanalysis reads ancient Greek myth, turning it from polytheism into story, it reinscribes these narratives into the Abrahamic monotheistic, patriarchal family.’¹² DuBois cites Richard Armstrong’s *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World* on why Freud chose Oedipus in particular:

... [Freud’s] recourse to this figure fits a pattern we have seen: a disturbance in his theorization leads him to adopt a figure of antiquity as he works toward his solutions. When his seduction theory of the neuroses collapses, he adopts Sophocles (or at least his Oedipus)... the recourse to figures of antiquity often hides a more troubling and proximate relation. Sophocles’ Oedipus, as some suggest, came along in time to save Freud from troubling doubts concerning Wilhelm Fleiss, his own father Jakob, or even his mother Amalie.¹³

DuBois continues: ‘For whatever reasons, if indeed as a technique of avoidance, Freud selected the figure of Oedipus out of a vast array of ancient mythological characters, and Oedipus came to haunt the twentieth century ...’¹⁴ I will return to the importance of Freud’s family structure in the development of his psychoanalytical theory and its importance for the adaptations under discussion in this chapter in more detail shortly.

The implications of psychoanalysis for family structure and conflict between siblings, fathers and sons, are also relevant. DuBois goes on to cite Regina Schwartz’s ‘Noah complex’ as defined in her book *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism*, casting psychoanalytical theory in the context of Judeo-Christian monotheism:

... love/hate for the father with whom the son identifies issues an intolerable guilt for that incestuous desire, a guilt projected onto an omnipotent monotheistic deity who punishes, maintaining his preserve at the price of his sons’ dissension, turning the brother into the reviled Other – is thoroughly predicated upon the supposition of scarcity. Scarcity imposes sibling rivalry: a shortage of parental blessings and love yields fatal competition for them. Scarcity imposes parental hostility; it presumes that in order to imitate the father successfully, he must be replaced, not joined... Scarcity

¹¹Zajko and O’Gorman (2013), 11.

¹²DuBois (2013), 325.

¹³As cited in DuBois (2013), 326.

¹⁴DuBois (2013), 326.

imposes patriarchy. . . Scarcity imposes monotheism: one god must maintain his singleness defensively, against the difference of other gods.¹⁵

DuBois quotes Schwartz again to reinforce her point: ' . . . the competition/identification with the father that issues in excessive solicitude toward him presumes, like the biblical scheme, that the father must be replaced, not joined.'¹⁶

Psychoanalytical readings of Euripides' *Hippolytus* begin with Rankin's 1974 article,¹⁷ which casts Hippolytus as a Freudian 'psychopathological hero' and argues that his repressed sexuality expresses itself in the form of an emphasis on chastity and of extreme misogyny. One key theme that Rankin explores is the interpretation of Artemis as a mother-surrogate, allowing Hippolytus to achieve reunion with his mother without any shame at his illegitimacy. H.D.'s *Hippolytus Temporizes* (1927), as we will see later, had already explored this theme: Artemis here has an enhanced role and is referred to multiple times by Hippolytus as 'Mother.' Rankin argues that in the Euripidean tragedy Artemis, as chief goddess of the Amazons, is a perfect mother-substitute for Hippolytus' absent Amazon mother, yet 'for all his unique intimacy with her, her face is as withdrawn from him as the unknown face of his mother.'¹⁸

No other woman can live up to the standard of perfection set by the virginity of Artemis, his ideal woman/mother – no wonder Phaedra's proposition is such a shock to him! It is what Rankin terms the 'incest barrier,'¹⁹ in reference to Hippolytus' repressed sexual attraction to his absent mother and mother-surrogate, that makes Phaedra's proposition so horrific: 'It was the tragic plot of Hippolytus to be confronted with the precise situation likely to breach the defenses he had erected in his conscious behavior against his repressed and unconscious desire for union with his mother. He was offered the temptation to supplant his father and become the lover of his stepmother, his father's mate, and so identifiable with his mother.'²⁰

¹⁵As cited in DuBois (2013), 326.

¹⁶As cited in DuBois (2013), 326.

¹⁷An earlier version of this article was published in 1968, which is why I consider this article before, e.g. Segal (1970).

¹⁸Rankin (1974), 78.

¹⁹Rankin (1974), 81.

²⁰Rankin (1974), 87.

George Devereaux makes some clinical observations about the relationship between Artemis and Phaedra, in particular looking at Phaedra's opening hunting fantasy and the connection it establishes between her and Artemis:

What, then, is the meaning of Phaidra's [hunting] fantasy, which so scandalises her faithful Nurse (212)? It cannot reflect only an identification with Hippolytos. Rather it involves also the wish to substitute herself for the one, Artemis, who – if we are to believe Hippolytos – does roam the meadows in his company and is a substitute for Hippolytos' Amazon mother. ... Hippolytos is attracted to Phaidra precisely *because* he is her (step)-son: a tabooed, incestuous love-object. The harder Phaidra tries to be chaste, the more she identifies herself with Artemis – and through her, with Hippolyte – the more her crypto-incestuousness becomes evident.²¹

We shall see shortly how H.D.'s adaptation provides a prime example of this analysis in practice – in her version, Phaedra manages to seduce Hippolytus literally by pretending to be Artemis. And we will see in O'Neill as well how a son's displaced love (and longing) for his lost mother is legitimised by a relationship with the younger stepmother who takes the biological mother's place.

Peter Rudnytsky's biographical observations on Freud's family structure also give insight into why the *Hippolytus* might also prove an interesting drama for psychoanalytical readings, even if there is no evidence that Freud himself showed any interest in the play. Generational confusion (loving a younger version of the mother or father) was also present in Freud's own history, as revealed in a letter from Freud to his adolescent friend Eduard Silberstein and described by Rudnytsky:

... in the course of the summer [before taking his *Matura* when Freud stayed with the Fluss family in Freiberg, where he had been born] the seventeen-year-old Freud became infatuated with Gisela Fluss, the younger of the two daughters, who was then fifteen. This adolescent passion is noteworthy in its own right, but the true crux of the episode resides in the fact, first established with the publication of the Silberstein correspondence, that Freud also developed a profound attachment to Emil and Gisela's mother, Frau Fluss. In a letter to Silberstein, Freud confessed, 'it seems that I have translated esteem for the mother into friendship with the daughter.' Freud's first love affair is thus a profoundly Oedipal experience, in which love for the mother is literally fused with – and prepares the way for – love for the

²¹Devereaux (1985), 55.

girl his own age. As Freud later told Martha, who only knew of Gisela's role in the story, he had been made to 'feel sentimental' by the return to his birthplace. The attraction Freud felt for Frau Fluss, therefore, was itself a 'supplement' for the absent mother 'at the source.'²²

This can be interestingly applied to O'Neill's Hippolytus figure Eben's experience with his father's second wife Anna (the Phaedra figure), who is closer to Eben in age than his father, but still first establishes her relationship with Eben as a mother-substitute, which then transforms itself into a relationship between lovers.

It was not just personal identification with Oedipus that was evident in Freud's personal life; his own family structure also has its own implications for the development of his psychoanalytical theories. Rudnytsky explains Freud's own family network:

The most salient details to remember are that when Freud's parents, Jakob Freud and Amalie Nathanson, were married in 1855, Jakob was already forty whereas Amalie was only twenty, and Jakob himself was already a grandfather by a grown son from his first marriage. Indeed, both of Jakob's sons from his first marriage, Emmanuel (born 1832 or 1833) and Philipp (born 1836), were at least as old as their father's new bride. When Sigmund was born in 1856, therefore, his genealogical position was very complicated. He was, as Siegfried and Suzanne Bernfield point out, 'the eldest son of this marriage, yet at the same time he was the youngest child in his family group.' What is more, the other children in the extended family, Emmanuel's children John and Pauline, were actually Freud's nephew and niece – that is 'beneath' him on the family tree – though John was one year older and Pauline the same age as he.²³

Phaedra's age is configured differently in different adaptations, which I will explore later in the thesis. However, for these psychoanalytical readings of the source material, the familial structure is very similar to that described in Freud's own family, with Hippolytus in a similar position to Freud's two stepbrothers. Rudnytsky notes the parallels to the Oedipus myth as follows: 'Edward Said has commented that the knowledge of incest "can very correctly be described as a tangling-up of the family sequence. . . . What overwhelms Oedipus is the burden of plural identities incapable of coexisting within one person," and exactly the same might be said of Freud. Because of

²²Rudnytsky (1987), 13.

²³Rudnytsky (1987), 15.

the discrepancy between the ages of his father and mother, there is indeed a “tangling-up of the family sequence” and Freud is confronted by the “burden of plural identities.” There could scarcely be a more vivid illustration of Oscar Wilde’s paradoxical dictum that “Life imitates Art” than this duplication between the three-generational kinship structures of Freud and Oedipus.²⁴ And we shall see in looking in detail at the two adaptations under discussion in this chapter, that this could equally apply to interpretations of the Hippolytus-Phaedra-Theseus triangle; these Hippolytus and Phaedra figures in particular are acutely aware of the plural identities they hold.

3.2 Eugene O’Neill’s *Desire Under the Elms*

For Eugene O’Neill, playwriting was a deeply personal endeavour to create lasting works of art. As his biographer Travis Bogard described him: ‘no other dramatist in the world’s history, not even excepting Strindberg with whom O’Neill felt particularly allied, continually turned the theatre to such personal purposes.’²⁵ O’Neill was also innovative, and his use of masks, music, and stage design were all ahead of his time. Bogard continues, ‘O’Neill shaped the course of American drama in its most significant developmental period, from 1915 to about 1930.’²⁶ O’Neill created drama that demanded a strong engagement from his audiences:

[O’Neill’s] theatrical effects were devised to shake his audiences from the spectator’s habitual, lethargic ‘suspended disbelief’ and to cause them to *believe*, to involve themselves directly, fully, committedly with the action, just as today the practitioners of ‘The Living Theatre’ or ‘The Theatre of Ceremony’ call on their audiences to become more participants than spectators.²⁷

Bogard continues, ‘during the 1920s, [O’Neill’s] experiments with contemporary psychological theory proved challenging to his audiences, although in more sophisticated retrospect, they seem obvious and oversimplified.’²⁸

²⁴Rudnytsky (1987), 16.

²⁵Bogard (1988), xiii.

²⁶Bogard (1988), xiii.

²⁷Bogard (1988), xiv.

²⁸Bogard (1988), xv.

Desire Under the Elms was the third in a series of plays written between 1922 and 1924, at the time when O'Neill first began his long and productive collaboration with theatre critic Kenneth MacGowan and set designer Robert Edmund Jones, all three called the Triumvirate and they took over the Provincetown Playhouse to stage their dramatic collaborations.²⁹ All three plays of this period were about marriage or relationships that were complex or forbidden; in the case of the earliest play, *Welded*, two married artists find themselves in conflict and competition, and the second play, *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, explores interracial marriage. Neither of the early plays was as successful as *Desire Under the Elms* where:

... surface and interior actions are brought into perfect conjunction. Technical experimentation is no longer self-assertively symbolic as were the shrinking rooms and follow-spots of the earlier plays. Now experiment serves realism and also, unobtrusively, opens the play to fuller perspectives. The characteristic *dramatis personae* – poetic hero, Strindbergian woman, materialistic brother, aloof and difficult father – are present, but they are drawn without the self consciousness that derives from excessive autobiographical concern. The typical themes – the yearning for a lost mother, for a home, for identification with a life force found in nature, and for the discovery of a god in marriage – are rooted, at last, in a credible fiction and characterizations. In all respects, *Desire Under the Elms* fulfils the promise of O'Neill's early career and is the first important tragedy to be written in America.³⁰

Bogard's language is that of a biographer deeply enamoured of O'Neill's work, but his points are important in demonstrating not only how *Desire Under the Elms* develops themes raised less sophisticatedly in earlier works around the same time period, but also in its lasting impact and popularity as one of the great American tragedies.

Bogard refers to a myriad of source material, citing not only Greek antecedents (described collectively as 'the legends of Oedipus, Phaedra and Medea') but also Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* and a contemporary comedy exploring similar themes, *They Knew What They Wanted* by Sidney Howard.³¹ Interestingly, in relation to the tensions we explored earlier in the chapter around Oedipus in the early twentieth cen-

²⁹For further detail on the Triumvirate and the other two plays composed at this time, see Bogard (1988), Chapter VI.

³⁰Bogard (1988), 200.

³¹See Bogard (1988), pages 200-201.

tury in England, O'Neill's play experienced its own censorship controversy when in February 1925 the District Attorney of New York City attempted to close the play on grounds of obscenity. The play was eventually cleared but controversy followed it on tour, actually increasing its interest, to O'Neill's dismay: 'We got a large audience, but of the wrong kind of people.'³² Bogard has much to say about O'Neill's Greek source material: 'In this play, O'Neill was first attempting what he later undertook more explicitly in *Mourning Becomes Electra*: to construct a tragedy-by-analogy, using ancient Greek tragedy in an American setting in order that something of the power of the earlier dramatic literature would emerge and strengthen his own concepts.'³³ For Bogard, echoing Zajko and O'Gorman much later on the links between psychoanalysis and myth:

[Greek tragedies] are responses to myth, assuming its qualities and its relation to the central needs of the culture which cherished them. In their characters, language and action they give articulate form to the submerged communal desires of a people, and thus bring it to a level of popular awareness, provocative of passion and purgation. In search of such awareness, O'Neill reached back in time to mythic circumstances derived from an earlier culture and reshaped them to the basic story of human desire and its aftermath he narrated for modern America.³⁴

O'Neill's play was also part of a wider trend in American theatre which questioned the popular image of masculinity:

...the films [of the 1920s and 1930s] created the sense of the American hero as vigorous, competent, individualistic and self-reliant. This image, however, was denied in the drama, where the competence and inner strength of the American male was continually questioned. There under many guises and with many changes of tone, he was shown to be a child questing through a hostile world in search of a lost mother.³⁵

Although the psychoanalytical implications here are clear, Bogard argues that O'Neill had another 'philosophical scheme that permitted a broad interpretation of his central concern. The scheme was Nietzsche's.'³⁶ Bogard goes on to analyse *Desire Under*

³²O'Neill quoted in Bogard (1988), 205.

³³Bogard (1988), 213.

³⁴Bogard (1988), 213-14.

³⁵Bogard (1988), 214. Bogard cites as examples Sidney Howard's *The Silver Cord*, Sidney Kingsley's *Dead End*, S.N. Behrman's *Biography*, and Philip Barney's comedies *Holiday* and *Awake and Sing*.

³⁶Bogard (1988), 215.

the Elms in light of Nietzsche's opposing Dionysian and Apollonian forces. He reads Abbie and Eben's love story as representing the Dionysian condition and reads the conflict between father and son as 'the conflict between a man who sought to achieve a Dionysian rapture and another who was dedicated to a life of unflinching self-denial and hardship, to whom the service of Dionysus seemed immorally easy and was in effect anathema.'³⁷ Bogard continues:

... the warfare of Eben and Ephraim [the Theseus figure] became the embodiment of a theological conflict based broadly on the antagonism of the Dionysian and Apollonian forces Nietzsche had described, a conflict fought in the 'universe' of the farm, in the particular arena its centre, the house, created.³⁸

There are undoubtedly two forces at work in O'Neill's play, although they can be called by many names. Bogard also refers to a so-called hard, Puritanical 'Father God', worshipped by the Theseus figure, Ephraim, and the soft, fertile 'Mother God' worshipped by Abbie and Eben. Be it the two goddesses of Euripides' version, Artemis and Aphrodite, Nietzsche's Apollo and Dionysus, a Father God and Mother God, or, to quote Bogard again, 'a power that lies in the stones and a power that lies in the soil,'³⁹ we shall see how these two forces are represented by space and landscape in the play, which are associated with contrasting masculine and feminine (maternal) identities.

Nature is an overpowering force in *Desire Under the Elms*. The elms themselves take on an almost human role in the drama and might even be said to take the place of the two opposing goddesses who frame the action in Euripides. O'Neill definitely saw the elm trees as vitally important to the telling of his story, and was not happy with how they were treated in the set of the opening production in November 1924, commenting: 'There have never been the elm trees of my play, characters almost.'⁴⁰

O'Neill's stage directions make this clear:

³⁷Bogard (1988), 217.

³⁸Bogard (1988), 218.

³⁹Bogard (1988), 222.

⁴⁰Cited in Dymkowski (1995), xvii. Interestingly, a similar dissatisfaction was raised in the *Guardian* review of the recent revival of the play at the Lyric Hammersmith: 'I had qualms about Ian MacNeil's design, which restlessly trucks on the separate rooms of the Cabot farm rather than showing a grand cross-section of the house in the style of August: Osage County' (<<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/oct/09/desire-under-the-elms-review>>).

Two enormous elms are on each side of the house. They bend their trailing branches down over the roof – they appear to protect and at the same time subdue; there is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing, jealous absorption. When the wind does not keep them astir, they develop from their intimate contact with the life of man in the house an appalling humaneness. They brood oppressively over the house, they are like exhausted women resting their sagging breasts and hands and hair on its roof, and when it rains their tears trickle down monotonously and rot on the shingles (General Scene).⁴¹

The isolation of the New England farmhouse and the overbearing, distinctly feminized, presence of the elm trees emphasise the maternal power that overshadows both the land and the house itself.

Abbie, the Phaedra figure, and Ephraim Cabot, the Theseus figure, also feel the powerful presence of the elms, although in very different ways. Abbie identifies with the irresistible power of the trees:

ABBIE ... (*She laughs a low humid laugh without taking her eyes from his. A pause – her body squirms desirously – she murmurs languorously.*) Hain't the sun strong an' hot? Ye kin feel it burnin' into the earth – Nature – makin' thin's grow – bigger 'n' bigger – burnin' inside ye⁴² – makin' ye want t' grow – into somethin' else – till we're mined with it 'an it's your'n – but it owns ye too – an' makes ye grow bigger – like a tree – like them elums – (*She laughs again softly, holding his eyes. He takes a step toward her, compelled against his will.*) Nature'll beat ye, Eben. Ye might's well own up t' it fust's last (Part Two, Scene One).

Abbie's identification with elms and the earthly force of Nature identify her with the maternal even before her relationship with Eben, the Hippolytus figure, has been conflated with the desperate need he feels for a mother figure. Whereas Abbie identifies with the elms, Ephraim is profoundly discomforted by them:

CABOT (*at the gate, confusedly*). Even the music can't drive it out – somthin' – ye kin feel it droppin' off the elums, climbin' up the roof,

⁴¹All quotes are taken from the O'Neill (1925) edition. The elms, especially since they are described with sagging breasts and long clinging hair, could also be seen to represent the Furies, those harsh and unrelenting upholders of Fate.

⁴²The burning imagery, so important a feature in Euripides and Seneca (and also, as we shall saw in the introduction, Sarah Kane's adaptation) comes up several times in *Desire Under the Elms*. When Abbie and Eben first kiss, Abbie has 'eyes burning with desire' and says to Eben after he rejects her: 'Waal, I kissed ye anyways – an' ye kissed back – yer lips was burnin' – ye can't lie 'bout that! (*Intensely.*) If ye don't care, why did ye kiss me back – why was yer lips burnin'?' (Part Two, Scene Two)

sneakin'n down the chimney, pokin' in the corners... They's no peace in houses, they's no rest livin' with folks. Somethin's always livin' with ye. (*With a deep sigh.*) I'll go t' the barn an' rest a spell. (*He goes wearily toward the barn.*) (Part Three, Scene One)

It is only natural that Ephraim, the male dominator of women and land (he has worked both of his previous wives to death and constantly seeks to exert control over his land through the building of stone walls), should feel so profoundly uncomfortable inside the house, the female domain.

Though the farmhouse and farmland are definitely identified with a maternal, female force, there are two other conflicting female forces at work in the play: the presence of Eben's dead mother and Abbie Putnam herself. Abbie has to displace Eben's mother in order to take control of the land and farm and make it her own. Before Abbie comes into the picture, Eben feels that the farm belongs to him because it was his mother's.⁴³ Abbie's arrival on the scene, with her own desire to have a home of her own, complicates Eben's plan to gain control of the farm after Ephraim dies. Abbie immediately sparks conflict with Eben when she claims ownership over the farm piece by piece: 'This be my farm – this be my hum – this be my kitchen – ! ... An' upstairs – that be my bedroom – an' my bed!' (Part One, Scene Four).

Abbie and Eben's relationship is only able to develop from passionate hatred into passionate desire through Abbie's identification with the maternal voice that she needs to replace. When Abbie and Eben meet for the first time as lovers, Eben's mother is a literal presence in the room, the parlour where she spent most of her time, a presence that they can both feel:

ABBIE ... Don't ye leave me, Eben! Can't ye see it hain't enuf – lovin' ye like a Maw – can't ye see it's got t' be that an' more – much more – a hundred times more – fur me t' be happy – fur yew t' be happy!
EBEN (*to the presence he feels in the room*). Maw! Maw! What d'ye want? What air ye tellin' me?
ABBIE. She's tellin' ye t' love me. She knows I love ye an' I'll be good t' ye. Can't ye feel it? Don't ye know? She's tellin' ye t' love me, Eben!
EBEN. Ay-eh. I feel – mebbe she – but – I can't figger out – why – when

⁴³Eben says to his brother Peter, who attempts to stake a claim on the farm: 'Ye've no right! She wa'n't yewr Maw! It was her farm! Didn't he steal it from her! She's dead. It's my farm' (Part One, Scene Two).

ye've stole her place – here in her hum – in the parlour whar she was ...
 ABBIE (*fiercely*). She knows I love ye! (Part Two, Scene Four)

Abbie and Eben's relationship is thus based on Abbie replacing his mother for him and filling the void that her loss left in her son. Their relationship is only legitimised in their eyes through the approval of Eben's mother ('She's tellin' ye t' love me, Eben!'). What Eben does not realise is that in taking the place of his mother, Abbie has also symbolically gained possession of the farm by instituting herself as the dominant feminine force.

Throughout *Desire Under the Elms* there is a tension between Eben's identification with his mother versus his father, the Theseus figure, Ephraim Cabot. Even before knowing that his father has come back with a new bride, Eben blames Ephraim for his mother's death and refuses to acknowledge Ephraim as his father:

EBEN (*very pale*). I meant – I hain't his'n – I hain't like him – he hain't me –
 PETER (*dryly*). Wait till ye've growed his age!
 EBEN (*intensely*). I'm Maw – every drop of blood! (*A pause. They stare at him with indifferent curiosity.*)
 PETER (*reminiscently*). She was good t' Sim 'n' me. A Good stepmaw's curse.
 SIMEON. She was good t' every one.
 EBEN (*greatly moved, gets to his feet and makes an awkward bow to each of them – stammering*). I be thankful t' ye. I'm her. Her heir. (*He sits down in confusion.*)
 PETER (*after a pause – judicially*). She was good even t' him.
 EBEN (*fiercely*). An' fur thanks he killed her! (Part One, Scene Two).⁴⁴

Eben seems to be the only person in the play who does not recognise the incredible similarity that he bears to his father. The phrases 'Dead spit an' image!' and 'Dog'll eat dog' have an almost choral quality in the play and are used and reused throughout to constantly keep the conflict between father and son in the audience's mind.

When Eben finds out from Ephraim that Abbie still intends to take over the farm, despite their affair, he is thrown into a murderous rage. Even though his violence is directed at Abbie, it is father and son who come to exchange blows:

⁴⁴Brian Friel's Hippolytus figure, Ben, in *The Living Quarters* (1977), also blames his father, Frank, for his mother's death, creating a divisive conflict between father and son that is very similar to the animosity between Eben and Ephraim.

[EBEN] *tries to throw CABOT aside. They grapple in what becomes immediately a murderous struggle. The old man's concentrated strength is too much for EBEN. CABOT gets one hand on his throat and presses him back across the stone wall. At the same moment, ABBIE comes out onto the porch. With a stifled cry she runs toward them* (Part Three, Scene Two).

Although Abbie breaks up the fight and Ephraim insists, 'Ye needn't t've fret, Abbie, I wa'n't aiming' to' kill him. He hain't wuth hangin' fur – not by hell of a sight', the conflict between father and son is clearly Freudian. Eben threatens Ephraim's position as head of household in more ways than Ephraim realises. By the end of the drama, it is revealed that Eben not only has a relationship with Abbie, but also fathered the child that Ephraim thought was his own.⁴⁵

A 1958 film version of *Desire Under the Elms* further adapts O'Neill's play, with Sophia Loren playing an Italian Anna, rather than Abbie.⁴⁶ The film version, though the story differs slightly, aptly captures the tension and atmosphere of the play, in particular the love triangle between the three protagonists: Anna (Abbie), Eben and Ephraim. When Anna and Eben first meet, it is a highly charged scene on the front porch of the house, where Anna is setting out blankets to air. Anna immediately says she does not want to 'play-act mother' to Eben because he is 'too big and strong for that' and instead proposes that they be friends. Anna's place as the new dominant female force on the farm is clear; she claims that Ephraim 'is ready to do pretty much anything to please the young wife' and teases Eben, saying she doesn't blame him for fearing 'the strange young girl taking his mother's place.' Eben reacts hostilely to this statement, saying 'you're not taking my mother's place.' Anna, however, makes it clear that she has come to stay, saying: 'Understand one thing boy, the lady of the house arrived today for good – this is my farm, my home, inside is my kitchen.' She

⁴⁵This is not the first adaptation where the incestuous relationship produces a child, cf. Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* discussed in McCabe (1993), 235. Abbie's murder of the child to preserve her relationship with Eben calls Euripides' *Medea* to mind.

⁴⁶The film was directed by Delbert Mann and the screenplay was written by Irwin Shaw. Burl Ives played Ephraim and Anthony Perkins, most famous for his role as Norman Bates in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, played Eben. Interestingly, Perkins also played the Hippolytus figure, Alexis, in the 1962 film *Phaedra* directed by Jules Dassin. In Dassin's film, the story is set in modern Greece; the Theseus figure, Thanos, is a shipping magnate and Phaedra is the daughter of his greatest competitor who falls for her stepson when she is sent to bring him back from London where he has abandoned a career in finance to become a painter.

continues, seductively, ‘Upstairs is my bedroom, and my bed.’ Anna makes it clear that she is in control and she knows that by reaching out to Eben as a friend, she can gain the upper hand. He storms away saying ‘We can never be friends’, which is of course true, as they will become lovers. Anna smiles a knowing smile as she watches him leave, again asserting her dominance over the house, saying ‘I’ll go wash my dishes now’ and the scene ends.

The parlour also has a strong presence in the film version, not as the place where the lovers first meet but as an embodiment of the maternal presence in the house no less; music ominously plays as Anna first enters the darkened room and starts opening the blinds and dusting the surfaces. Ephraim interrupts and demands that she ‘put everything back the way it was and close the shutters. You do what you want with the rest of the house but this room stays the way it was and the door stays closed, do you understand that. This was her room, Eben’s mother’s, she was weak and she was no good for me, this is where she hid from me, taught him ever-lasting rebellion here. This was a woman’s room and I never was welcome in it. When she died I closed it for good, it’s not going to be open now.’ Ephraim’s desperation to remain in control over the female forces that have threatened him in the past is palpable, but, as Anna’s lingering smile before she shuts the door again on the parlour foretells, his efforts will be in vain. She will ultimately exploit the rivalry between father and son, supplant the dead mother, and control both men.

3.3 H.D.’s *Hippolytus Temporizes*

H.D.’s diverse body of work includes several translations of Euripidean choruses, an unpublished group of essays entitled ‘Notes on Euripides, Pausanias, and Greek Lyric Poets’, a huge number of poems drawing upon Euripides’ plays, and a heavily commented translation of the *Ion*, written ten years after *Hippolytus Temporizes*.⁴⁷ In

⁴⁷This list of H.D.’s works inspired by Euripides is largely taken from Fox (2001), 20-21. For a more comprehensive list of all of H.D.’s classically inspired (not just Euripidean) works, see the appendix to Gregory (1997), ‘Classical Texts in H.D.’s Collected Poems, 1912-1944’, 233-258. The breadth of classical knowledge that H.D. possessed is evidenced by the huge variety of classical authors who inspired her work.

addition to being interested in Euripides more generally, H.D.'s poems and translations also reveal a particular interest in Phaedra and Hippolytus.⁴⁸ *Hippolytus TempORIZES*, written between 1924 and 1925 and published in book form in 1927, incorporates three earlier works: a poem by the same title, originally written in 1921 but which also serves as a preface to the printed version of the play, and two other poems, 'Leucadian Artemis' (1924) and 'Songs from Cyprus' (1925).⁴⁹ Unusual amongst the adaptations discussed in this thesis, H.D.'s version has a chorus (dead virgin maidens who follow Artemis) as well as a strong divine presence.⁵⁰ Although Aphrodite does not have a speaking role, she is present through the Cyprian boy and Phaedra herself; Artemis has a huge role (she is arguable the main character); and H.D. even adds another god, Helios, who in some ways replaces Theseus as the dominant male in the play.

In many ways H.D. was a classicist first and a poet second. She had started a course in Greek Literature at Bryn Mawr, although she dropped out after only a few terms because of bad grades and emigrated to London, where her longtime friend and sometime lover Ezra Pound had already moved. It was Pound who gave her the nickname 'H.D. Imagiste,' which would stick throughout the rest of her career, and it was he through whom H.D. became associated with imagism and the modernist movement.⁵¹ In her poetry and other writing, H.D. sought to overcome the fragmentation that she faced in her own life. Not only was she an American expatriate living in England, but she also struggled with her bisexuality throughout her life, moving between various male and female lovers. H.D. was very much influenced by Freud. Although she would not start undergoing analysis with Freud until 1933, quite a few years after she completed

⁴⁸Titles of poems inspired by the Phaedra and Hippolytus myth include: 'Hippolytus TempORIZES' (1921), 'Phaedra' (1920), 'She Contrasts Herself with Hippolyta' (1921), 'She Rebukes Hippolyta' (1920), 'Leucadian Artemis, All Mountains' (1925), 'Moonrise' (1915), 'Orion Dead' (1914), and 'Huntress' (1915). List compiled from Fox (2001), 111.

⁴⁹Fox (2001), 110.

⁵⁰The chorus of dead virgin maidens calls to mind the chorus in Act II of the ballet *Giselle ou les Wilis* of 1841, which Macintosh describes as follows: 'As ghosts of virgin women, they appear by night in the forest and "feed" on young men, whom they dance to death. The latent connections between dance and sexual gratification at this time – dancing too much is code for nymphomania; viewing dancers, as we have seen, a form of surrogate sex – are extended in *Giselle's* narrative of social class and female desire' (Macintosh (2010), 323). H.D. is doing with words what is later picked up in movement, via Martha Graham and more recently Alston's choreography for Britten's *Phaedra*, both of which I explore in §5.2 and §5.4 respectively.

⁵¹On H.D., Pound, and modernism, see Flack (2015), especially Chapter 5 (162-195).

Hippolytus Temporizes, several articles and much of her early poetry clearly indicate that H.D. was long interested in his work. *Hippolytus Temporizes* very much explores the Oedipal side of the incest story. H.D.'s Hippolytus expresses strong sexual desire for his dead mother Hippolyta, as well as for Artemis, who is for him a maternal figure; and although Phaedra seduces him, she seduces him in the guise of Artemis.

H.D.'s own fragmented sense of self is also manifest in her relationship to her Greek source material. It is, on the one hand, largely true that 'H.D.'s Hellenic nostalgia is oriented toward the figure of the mother, who is occluded within father and hero worship.'⁵² So in *Hippolytus Temporizes*, Hippolyta/Artemis, whose identities are conflated by Hippolytus throughout the drama, play a huge role, whilst Theseus, the dominant male figure in the Euripidean original, is not given any lines. On the other hand, it is also true that despite her 'recurrent recognition of the significance of the maternal within psychological and cultural life,' H.D. was never able to ignore 'the power of paternal authority ... especially as it is figured in Hellenism and in the public appropriation of the ancients.'⁵³ This tension in H.D.'s own life between female daemonic power and authoritative patriarchal power was resolved in *Hippolytus Temporizes* through the figure of Helios. The sun god dominates the second half of the play and demands resolution between the dying Hippolytus and the goddess Artemis, who at first is unwilling to come to the aid of the man who has destroyed himself through his love for her.

In *Hippolytus Temporizes*, nature and outdoor space are connected to the feminine and maternal, just like the elms in *Desire Under the Elms*. And in H.D. nature is directly contrasted to the formality and masculinity of the royal court and indoor space. Hippolytus' rejection of his role as prince and his desire to remain outside on the seashore, the realm of both Artemis and Aphrodite, is symbolic of his rejection of his paternal, masculine side and his desire to identify with the feminine. In H.D.'s drama there is an additional link between the natural and the divine. The outdoors is the realm of the goddesses, particularly Artemis, who is so central to the play. In H.D.'s

⁵²Gregory (1997), 4.

⁵³Gregory (1997), 4.

adaptation it is Artemis, not Phaedra, who becomes the representation of Hippolytus' dead mother, Hippolyta. Phaedra does seduce Hippolytus, but only by pretending to be Artemis. It is the Hippolytus – Artemis – Hippolyta relationship that is central to the drama.

Both Artemis and Hippolyta are described as elements of nature. Artemis, first, is described as a flower by the pursuing Hippolytus:⁵⁴

Hippolytus:

O wild,
wild,
wild,
O sweet,
is this the shape and pattern
of your feet
or some bright flower
blown here from other lands?
is this some blossom,
wafted from your hands,
of the white trail of phosphorescent sea?
is this flower shaken from some woodland tree
or have the stars trailed down
to brush the land? (12)

Later in the same scene Artemis describes Hippolyta as a blend of various kinds of trees:

Artemis:

You had the hills,
the willows,
white ash,
poplar
bent into one form,
true,
lithe tree-boughs for a mother.

⁵⁴All quotations are taken from H.D. (2003). It is also important to note that Artemis is the object of Hippolytus' hunt in H.D.'s adaptation. In a play that is all about the blurring of identities, it is crucial that Artemis resists her identity as a goddess and wants nothing more than to escape into nothingness, to blend into her surroundings and be 'no more a goddess.' Fervent prayers, like Hippolytus', trap her ('Have I no peace, | no quiet anywhere? | you trick, | you trap, Hippolytus, | a goddess in your snare,' 18) and prevent her from disappearing into the anonymity and oneness with nature that she longs for ('at just that moment | as I lose my shape, | become immortal, evanescent, | essence of wood-things | and no more a goddess, | at just that moment | when I would attain immortal sustenance | and gain my rest, | some prayer arises dimming tree and forest | and I must answer those who party the goddess ... 17').

In contrast to O'Neill, H.D.'s two female forces (Artemis and Hippolyta) do not stand in opposition or conflict to one another; rather their identities are conflated and blurred, especially by Hippolytus, who sees Artemis as a mother-substitute at the same time as he expresses highly eroticised desire for her.

Phaedra ultimately convinces Hippolytus to sleep with her not simply by pretending to be Artemis, but by convincing him that the goddess has forsaken her desire to escape into the natural world out of love for him:

Tell to your king,
the prince Hippolytus,
that human frailty and mortal commerce
tempt me now,
more
than any tree or forest
or any cataract
or mountain torrent;
tell to your lord,
your prince Hippolytus
that Artemis chooses
actually as a goddess,
love, love, love, love
that mocks the lure of forests
love that enchants the sea-fowl and the beast (68).

Phaedra's language here is full of much of the vivid imagery that marks H.D.'s adaptation. The queen creates a contrast between the natural, outdoor world where Hippolytus (and Artemis) feel most comfortable (phrases such as 'any tree or forest' and 'mountain torrent' 'love that enchants the sea-fowl and the beast'), with the indoor world of the royal court (repeatedly referring to Hippolytus as 'prince' and phrases such as 'human frailty and mortal commerce' and 'love | that mocks the lure of forests'), attempting to lure Hippolytus by claiming, erroneously, that his beloved goddess has succumbed to the lure of the love of a prince and his court.

Phaedra's seduction is ironic as Hippolytus has actively rejected his rightful place as Theseus' heir out of his love/desire for Artemis and her natural domain. Hippolytus does not at all identify with Theseus' world; the kingdom and kingship are not his own:

Tell to your king,

your Theseus,
 that his son
 seeks in the hills, the valleys,
 in the plains, the rivers,
 to recall the trace
 of one
 long since forgotten (34).

We see again the vivid imagery of the outdoor world, in the series of natural elements ('the hills, the valleys . . . the plains, the rivers'). The 'one long since forgotten' must be Hippolyta and the use of the pronoun 'your' here ('your king', 'your Theseus') serves to further emphasise how Hippolytus does not consider his father's world to be his own. Hippolytus also sees Phaedra as part of the world of the royal court and rejects her and his father together:

Yes, tell the king
 his son has jeered at him,
 shout to the woods
 that he has gained no love
 with all his senile Greek urbanities;
 tell Theseus of Athens he begot
 . . .
 a spear, a shaft of lightning
 for a son,
 and that son loves in all the world
 no queen
 of spice and perfume
 but the immortal flower
 bred in the storm,
 sister of the ice and wind,
 queen only of the soul,
 white Artemis (36).

There are again several important repeating images here. Hippolytus compares himself to 'a spear' and 'a shaft of lightning', images that will later be used to describe his mother Hippolyta (emphasising the close connection between the two). Hippolytus' relationship with Artemis is elemental, uniting forces of nature in the imagery of hot and cold (he is the 'shaft of lightning' and she the 'sister of ice and wind'). Hippolytus' words are later echoed, again ironically, by Phaedra when she first enters in Act II:

O, is it not enough to greet

the red-rose
 for the red, red sweet of it?
 must we encounter
 with each separate flower,
 some god, some goddess? (49)

The image of the ‘red’ rose contrasts to Hippolytus’ description of ‘white Artemis’ earlier, and calls to mind the rival goddess, Aphrodite. The irony is increased by the fact that Hippolytus pledges to love ‘no queen’ when it will be the queen who seduces him in the guise of the very goddess he so loves, and she has mocked.

Hippolytus’ identification with the feminine and the natural world is further explained by his feelings toward his dead mother. Hippolytus not only loves Hippolyta (when Artemis says, ‘What love, what love | may bind our hearts together?’ Hippolytus replies, ‘Love of Hippolyta, | my loveliest mother’), but also feels possessed by her:

Artemis:

Hippolyta had rare grace
 and holiness;
 she was a woman.

Hippolytus:

But I, but I,
 her white soul lives in me,
 Hippolyta lives in me,
 in my taut brain,
 in all these thoughts
 you say temper my prayers,
 Hippolyta is my arrow-point,
 my spear,
 she listens now
 in every bright and evanescent leaf,
 she hears.

Artemis:

Hippolyta,
 my friend,
 chaste queen and ally,
 valiant and fervid Amazon
 is dead.

Hippolytus:

O if she were,
 how simple,
 ...
 O if Hippolyta were only dead in me,
 then I would sit in front of all the throng,

as Theseus bids me in the banquet hall,
 smiling and suave,
 all of the courtier,
 great Theseus as you call him,
 bids me be;
 O if Hippolyta were dead in me (27-28).

Here imagery links Hippolytus, Artemis, and Hippolyta. Hippolyta's 'white soul' that 'lives in' her son is echoed by the 'white Artemis' Hippolytus uses later, and 'my arrow-point, | my spear' also echoes the passage quoted above, when Hippolytus uses these words to describe himself.

The fact that 'my spear' is a distinctly phallic image further emphasises how Hippolyta has taken over her son – she has taken over his most masculine feature and replaced it with the feminine. As a result, Hippolytus not only rejects his maleness (i.e. his role as son of Theseus and prince of Athens), but also feels incapable of fulfilling these roles precisely because his mother is such a dominant presence in his very existence. Because he feels possessed by his mother's soul, he feels that companionship with Artemis is the natural place for him to exist. H.D.'s Hippolytus is trapped in the infantile, Oedipal state; he is literally unable to escape his connection with and dependence on his mother. Through worship of Artemis, and his endless pursuit of a relationship with her, Hippolytus seeks to remain in the world of the feminine, never leaving the protective womb of his mother.

Although Theseus does not have a speaking role in *Hippolytus TempORIZES*, the conflict between Hippolytus and his father is no less a prominent feature in the play. Hippolytus rejects the royal court, the world of his father and Phaedra, in preference for the natural world and communion with Artemis, and through her, his mother Hippolyta. This is despite Artemis' repeated criticisms of Hippolytus for spending too much time in worship and forgetting his responsibility to his father and his kingdom: 'You waste your life | in shadowing Artemis ... What of the city | the demands of kingship' (15) and 'Athens claims you | and the Athenian throne – ' (25). To these criticisms, Hippolytus, still desperate to be a part of the feminine realm that Artemis occupies, replies: 'My city is the forest, | I its high priest – ' (15) and 'I would not rule,

| O I would only rest, | forgetting everything | in this cold place' (25). Hippolytus' refusal to take up his place as prince of Athens, however, is about more than simply preferring nature and Artemis' company. When he is called up by his servant Hyperides to return to the palace, he expresses a deep resentment for his father:

Hyperides

Part of my duty,
part of my content,
my fate, indeed my greatest happiness
is to be servant of a mighty prince,
son of great Theseus,
Athens' potentate.

Hippolytus

Your Theseus,
your Athens
make me sick. (33).

The repetition of the distancing pronoun, 'your', emphasises how Hippolytus does not at all identify with Theseus' world (and the masculine space of the court), but also emphasises the hatred he has for his father and all that he represents.

Hatred for Theseus is something that Phaedra and Hippolytus have in common. Phaedra actually expresses desire to murder the husband she detests in a conversation with her maid Myrrhina:

O when I see that pattern of heart's fervour
and his father,
I ache with some old savagery
to turn
within the heavy laden heart
of Theseus
some simple, fragile thing,
omnipotent,
single metal
with no flaw;
I'd turn and turn and turn
that little steel;
then, Theseus,
would you feel? (58)

It is impossible to ignore the allusion here to Hippolyta, twice described as a spear, and thus to Hippolytus himself. Could Hippolytus be the very weapon that Phaedra

is referring to, which she intends to use to destroy Theseus? This compares to Abbie's desire in *Desire Under the Elms* to murder Ephraim, which is revealed after she has murdered her baby in the hopes that it will allow her and Eben to be together.⁵⁵

Despite his insistence that he shares nothing with his father, the pull of Hippolytus' identification as the male heir to the throne of Athens is ultimately too strong and Artemis refuses to defy it. When Hippolytus looks to Artemis to fill the void left by his mother's death, she refuses:

Hippolytus

Mother.

Artemis

Nay, nay,

you are no son, no child of mine,
in you yet lives the strong and valiant soul
of Theseus of Athens;
should I cherish here,
this prince of Athens,
bid him betray
his kingship
and the kings that after him
may sway all Attica,
then were the gods,
Zeus, Pallas and Another
wroth with me. (30)

As much as he feels possessed by his mother, and as a result, feels incapable of taking up his male roles and prefers to play the female role as a consort of Artemis, Hippolytus ultimately has no choice but to be his father's son, as Artemis will make him painfully aware.

3.4 Postscript: Psychoanalytical antecedents

H.D.'s focus on the relationship between Hippolytus and Artemis, as well as his relationship with his Amazon mother, has important antecedents in the scholarship and

⁵⁵ABBIE (*gives [Ephraim] a furious push which sends him staggering back and springs to her feet – with wild rage and hatred*). Don't ye dare tech me! What right hev ye' t' question me 'bout him [the baby]? He wa'n't yewr son! Think I'd have a son by yew? I'd die fust! I hate the sight o' ye an' allus did! It's yew I should've murdered, if I'd had good sense! I hate ye! I love Eben. I did from the fust. An' he was Eben's son – mine an' Eben's – not your'n! (Part Three, Scene Four)

literature of the late nineteenth century. John Addington Symonds in his *Studies of the Greek poets* shows great appreciation for the *Hippolytus* in Chapter XIV of his lecture series, entitled ‘Greek Tragedy and Euripides’. Like his nineteenth-century contemporaries, Symonds shows preference for Aeschylus and Sophocles in most Greek tragedies, but says of Euripides, ‘Where he brakes [sic] new ground, as in the *Medea*, the *Hippolytus*, and the *Bacchae*, he proves himself a consummate master.’⁵⁶ His description of Euripides’ lyrics also echo much of the natural imagery used in H.D.: ‘The lyrics of Euripides are among the choicest treasures of Greek poetry: they flow like mountain rimlets, flashing with sunbeams, edying in cool shady places, rustling through leaves of mint, forget-me-not, marsh-marigold, and dock.’⁵⁷ Symonds judges Phaedra harshly (‘The pride of her good name drives Phaedra to a crime more detestable than Medea’s, because her victim Hippolytus is eminently innocent’⁵⁸) and puts Hippolytus on a pedestal:

[Hippolytus’] piety is as untainted as his purity; it is the maiden-service of a maiden-saint. In his observance of the oath extorted from him by Phaedra’s nurse, in his obedience to his father’s will, in his kindness to his servants, in his gentle endurance of a painful death, and in the joy with which he greets the virgin huntress when she comes to visit him, Euripides has firmly traced the ideal of a guileless, tranquil manhood. Hippolytus among the ancients was the Paladin of chastity, the Percival of true romance. Nor is any knight of medieval legend more true and pure than he.⁵⁹

Symonds’ chosen quotes from the *Hippolytus*, in Greek with his own translation, also show his prejudice towards the hero and his chosen goddess; his first quote is Hippolytus’ first entrance ‘with a garland of wild flowers for Artemis’, his second is Hippolytus’ death scene when he becomes aware of Artemis’ presence, and the final quote is a long excerpt of the exchange between Artemis and Hippolytus reconciling father and son by revealing the truth of Phaedra’s suicide.⁶⁰

In 1842, Robert Browning had published the poem *Artemis Prologuizes*, an epilogue to Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, but clearly nodding to Racine as well. Browning, in a note

⁵⁶Symonds (1893), 27.

⁵⁷Symonds (1893), 28.

⁵⁸Symonds (1893), 38.

⁵⁹Symonds (1893), 38-9.

⁶⁰Symonds (1893), 39-41.

accompanying the first proof of the poem's publication, described the work as follows: 'I had better say perhaps that the above is nearly all retained of a tragedy I composed, much against my endeavour, while in bed with a fever two years ago – it went further into the story of Hippolytus and Aricia; but when I got well, putting only thus much down at once, I soon forgot the remainder, which came nearer the mark, I think.'⁶¹ Browning's poem is told from the perspective of Artemis as she awaits the resurrection of Hippolytus, first described as '... this dead Youth, Asclepios bends above, was dearest to me' (lines 13-14).⁶² The perspective is, understandably, harsh against Phaedra and sympathetic towards Hippolytus. Artemis describes the queen as follows:

Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke
Of tapers lulled, in jealousy despatched
A noisesome lust that, as the gadbee stings,
Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for the child
Of Theseus her great husband then afar.
But when Hippolytos exclaimed with rage
Against the miserable Queen, she judged
Intolerable life, and, pricked at heart
An Amazonian stranger's race had right
To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord:
Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll
The fame of him her swerving made not swerve...⁶³

Although Aphrodite's role is acknowledged (as is the fact that Hippolytus 'paid no homage to another God' (line 18),⁶⁴ the queen is also held responsible. Hippolytus' Amazonian heritage is referenced as causing the queen particular offence (indirectly calling to mind the woman who will become the rival for Phaedra's affection in H.D.'s adaptation, Hippolytus' mother Hippolyta).

Browning spends a significant time on Hippolytus' death, in all its gruesome detail, with Hippolytus dismembered.⁶⁵ Artemis' tenderness for her devotee is emphasised

⁶¹Browning (1991), 106. In their notes on the poem (Browning (1991), 106-7), editors Woolford and Karlin mention not only Euripides' *Hippolytus* as Browning's source, but also Ovid's *Metamorphoses* xv 492-546, and Virgil's *Aeneid* vii 765-77, which makes reference to Hippolytus' relationship with the nymph Aricia after his resurrection.

⁶²Browning (1991), 107.

⁶³Browning (1991), 108-9. On Browning's spelling of the proper names, see the editors note in Browning (1991), 107.

⁶⁴Browning (1991), 108.

⁶⁵Browning (1991), 110. See in particular the editors' note on lines 54-9, which sites Ovid's *Metamorphoses* xv 521-9 as well as other potential sources. I would also add Seneca's *Phaedra* 1085-1104.

across the poem, from the early line already quoted where Hippolytus is referred to as ‘dearest’ to her, and she takes her commitment to her followers very seriously: ‘I, who ne’er forsake my votaries.’⁶⁶ Her anticipation of Hippolytus’ resurrection shows great tenderness toward the youth in the closing lines of the poem:

... O, cheer,
 Divine presenter of the healing rod
 Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye,
 Twines his lithe spires around! I say, much cheer!
 Proceed thou with they wisest pharmacies!
 And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs,
 Ply, as the Sage directs, these buds and leaves
 That strew the turn around the Twain! While I
 In fitting silence the event await.⁶⁷

Again we see similar imagery to that used by H.D. in her descriptions of the natural world, but also using ‘white crowd’ to describe the nymphs who attend. The goddess is also humanised in these final words, standing in silence and awe at the power of Asclepius in bringing her beloved prince, who the poem makes clear has suffered an unjust death, back to life.

In 1858 the American writer Julia Ward Howe had written her own verse play based on the *Hippolytus*, ‘inspired by [the actor Edwin] Booth’s youthful beauty, reserve, shyness, and intelligence.’⁶⁸ Foley’s description of the play reveals Howe’s focus on the male protagonist. A *New York Times* critic commented: ‘In Mrs. Howe’s play, Hippolytus is a more considerable and vivid figure, vowed and set apart. It is the tragedy of the youth as well as the woman.’⁶⁹ The original performance of the play planned for 1864 was cancelled for unknown reasons, and the play was not performed until after Howe’s death at the Tremont Theatre in Boston in March 1911; the manuscript itself would not be published until 1941.⁷⁰ Foley describes Howe’s take on the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition as follows:

In Howe’s play, Hippolytus’ chastity is motivated more elaborately than

⁶⁶Browning (1991), 111.

⁶⁷Browning (1991), 113.

⁶⁸Foley (2015), 85.

⁶⁹Foley (2015), 87.

⁷⁰Foley (2015), 85.

in earlier versions, and the hyperpassionate Phaedra is more deliberately seductive and vengeful. Hippolytus' inspired relation to Artemis, pointedly linked to his love for his Amazon mother, is emphasized by the goddess' direct encounters and engagement with him and the presence of Amazons in the woodland where Hippolytus hunts: 'My mother was the lofty Amazon – | Wedded by Theseus – as she bequeathed to me | Her worship, dearer than my father's fame' (80). In an era where passionate primitive heroines (a specialty for [the actress first slated to play Howe's Phaedra] Cushman and other actresses of this period) and a new spiritual, idealized, even feminized male acting style (above all, that of Booth) were reaching the height of their popularity in American theatre, Howe's play also seems, as we shall see, to respond in a new way to the gender role reversals that appear in Euripides' version, where the virginal Hippolytus becomes the object of a cult worship after death for young women before marriage, and the love-sick Phaedra longs to break out of domestic confinement and become a huntress in the wilds.⁷¹

We can see here echoes of Eugene O'Neill's Eben and Abbie characters, with the adjectives 'spiritual' and 'idealized' or 'hyperpassionate' respectively applying well to the protagonists of *Desire Under the Elms* (and certainly we see the 'seductive and vengeful' side of Abbie in Sophia Loren's Anna in the film version).

Foley demonstrates the positioning of Artemis as a character in Howe:

Howe develops a complex divine-human bond between Artemis and Hippolytus. Hippolytus, who has long pursued a flitting image of Artemis in his hunts, finally meets her, is tested by her as she enumerates the dangers (familiar in myth) faced by mortals who wished to see the goddess, and resolves on eternal fidelity to Artemis in order 'to grow to be a hero thus.' Hippolytus' spiritual passion meets with a response verging on reciprocal love. As the goddess says in the final scene: 'I live in holy cherished maidenhood, | But thou are dearer than the world to me' (126). The empowering sight of the long sought divinity (an experience denied to Euripides' Hippolytus, who only hears her) makes Howe's Hippolytus feel 'invincible' to mortal distractions (94).⁷²

Here we have an echo of the tenderness shown by Artemis as she awaits Hippolytus' resurrection in Browning's poem, with her 'thou are dearer to me'. And we certainly see echoes of this kind of relationship between Hippolytus and Artemis in H.D.. There are some key differences, however, in that the bond between the prince and the goddess in H.D. is built upon and strengthened by the strong presence of Hippolytus' dead

⁷¹Foley (2015), 87.

⁷²Foley (2015), 88.

mother. It is this that Phaedra will exploit when she seduces Hippolytus in H.D.'s play. Howe's Hippolytus, also, does not reject the heroic world in which he belongs by birth to the same extreme as H.D.'s Hippolytus. As Foley describes: 'Here Hippolytus is reluctant to assume the crown through pious grief, not through a devotion to his apolitical earlier life. Indeed, unlike Euripides' Hippolytus, he is repeatedly ready to move on to mature manly roles including war or quest.'⁷³ There is no conflict between father and son in Howe, who preserves the tenderness between the male protagonists; Hippolytus departs for his exile begging Phaedra to spare his father the truth of her passion, and forgives his father with his dying breath.⁷⁴ Like H.D., Howe also shows some allusion to ballet, with her chorus of nymphs who close the play.⁷⁵

The texts we have explored so far all, like H.D., prioritise the relationship between Hippolytus and Artemis, but the strong link to his mother, which is a significant feature in both H.D. and O'Neill, appears most distinctly in another late nineteenth-century work, the 'Hippolytus Veiled' by the essayist Walter Pater, originally published, like many other of Pater's works, in *MacMillan's Magazine* (Volume 60, August 1889).⁷⁶ Like his contemporary Browning, Walter Pater draws his version from a myriad of sources, including Ovid's *Metamorphoses* xv 479-552 and *Heroides* IV, Seneca's *Phaedra*, and Racine's *Phèdre*.⁷⁷ Pater's body of work shows a particular interest in grieving mothers, and he vastly expands the role of Hippolytus' Amazon mother, Antiope,⁷⁸ in the 'Hippolytus Veiled', as Østermark-Johansen, the editor to a 2014 volume of Pater's *Imaginary Portraits*, summarises:

Pater, on the other hand, turns [Antiope] into a loving, enduring, mother, the constant element in Hippolytus' life, who outlives her son. She thus fits into the line of grieving mothers which can be traced in Pater's writings, from his emphasis on the *pietà* in the Michelangelo essay (1871) to his fascination with Demeter, grieving over the loss of Persephone in the Demeter essay (1875). The Hippolytus text revolves around four mothers: the soli-

⁷³Foley (2015), 88.

⁷⁴Foley (2015), 89.

⁷⁵Foley (2015), 89-90.

⁷⁶Pater (2014), 215, opening note.

⁷⁷Pater (2014), 47.

⁷⁸On why the Amazon is here called Antiope rather than the more common Hippolyta (as used in H.D.), see Pater (2014), 233 note 41.

tary, single and mortal mother Antiope, the divine and chaste Artemis as a parallel or rivalrous mother, the wicked stepmother Phaedra, incapable of governing her passions. . . . In the background the figure of Demeter hovers, with the myth that she, rather than Leto, is the true mother of Artemis.⁷⁹

In Pater, Antiope is the wronged woman, set aside for the younger Phaedra. Early in his essay Pater sets up a conflict between Phaedra and Theseus' first wife, who was cast aside for the young queen:

As for Antiope, the conscience of her perfidy remained with her, adding the pang of remorse to her own desertion, when King Theseus, with his accustomed bad faith to women, set her, too, aside in turn. Phaedra, the true wife, was there, peeping suspiciously at her arrival; and even as Antiope yielded to her lord's embrace the thought had come that a male child might be the instrument of her anger, and one day judge her cause.⁸⁰

Here we see the seeds of an O'Neill-like Abbie figure in a queen who sees Hippolytus first as a threat to her own control over Theseus and his kingdom.

Both mother and son are exiled and Hippolytus grows up under the care of his Amazon mother, who he has transformed from the war-like Amazonian stereotype. And it is out of his love for his pious single mother that Hippolytus' devotion to Artemis springs:

To her [Artemis], nevertheless, her maternity, her solitude, to this virgin mother, who, with no husband, no lover, no fruit of her own, is so tender to the children of others, in a full heart he devotes himself – his immaculate body and soul. Dedicating himself thus, he has the sense also that he becomes more entirely than ever the chevalier of his mortal mother, of her sad cause.⁸¹

Hippolytus' devotion to Artemis grows and as he comes to think of her as 'his new mother'⁸², and jealousy grows in Antiope:

. . . and the mortal mother felt nothing less than jealousy from the hour when the lad had first delightedly called her to share his discoveries, and learn the true story (if it were not rather the malicious counterfeit) of the

⁷⁹Pater (2014), 49.

⁸⁰Pater (2014), 224.

⁸¹Pater (2014), 228. This language echoes the imagery used to describe Hippolytus as a knight by John Addington Symonds, quoted above.

⁸²Pater (2014), 228.

new divine mother to whom he has thus absolutely entrusted himself. Was not this absolute chastity itself a kind of death?⁸³

This leads Antiope to long to retain her close connection to her son in his child-like state, even while she knows that his growing up and leaving her is inevitable ('half-selfish for a moment, she prays that he may remain for ever a child, to her solace'⁸⁴).

Eventually Hippolytus is invited to visit his father and his new bride in Athens. At first, Hippolytus is described as distinctly other, characterised by his humble upbringing with his mother outside of the city (he is wearing a 'long strange gown of homespun grey, like the soft coat of some wild creature who might let one stroke it'⁸⁵). However, as his confidence and comfort in this new environment grows, so does his rivalry with his father and his attraction to his stepmother. It is Artemis who helps him to fit in at court; she 'transformed her young votary from a hunter into a charioteer, a rearer and driver of horses, after the fashion of his Amazon mothers before him.'⁸⁶ There are also allusions to a sexual relationship between the goddess and her devotee, at least in rumours: 'At Athens strange stories are told in turn of him, his nights upon the mountains, his dreamy sin, with that hypocritical virgin goddess, stories which set the jealous suspicions of Theseus at rest once more.'⁸⁷

These rumours, ironically, temporarily reassure Theseus that his son is no threat; however, it is at this point that Phaedra starts to take interest in her stepson. Aphrodite is also introduced, as another female character who has an interest in Hippolytus ('Aphrodite too had looked with delight upon the youth'), however, 'Hippolytus would have no part in her worship.'⁸⁸ Phaedra's desire is described in Pater as follows:

Phaedra too, his step-mother, a fiery soul with wild strange blood in her veins, forgetting her fears of this illegitimate rival of her children, seemed now to have seen him for the first time, loved at last the very touch of his fleecy cloak, and would fain have had him of her own religion. As though the once neglected child had been another, she tries to win him as a stranger

⁸³Pater (2014), 229.

⁸⁴Pater (2014), 229-30.

⁸⁵Pater (2014), 230.

⁸⁶Pater (2014), 231.

⁸⁷Pater (2014), 231.

⁸⁸Pater (2014), 232.

in his manly perfection, growing more than an affectionate mother to her husband's son.

Phaedra, at this point, is very much Aphrodite's devotee (Aphrodite is referred to as 'her sprightly goddess'). There is also a strong political dimension here, which we have seen as one of the hallmarks of incest dramas of the eighteenth century. Hippolytus is unwittingly drawn into a symbolic wedding, first to his stepmother, and then to his beloved goddess, both of whom tempt him to remain in the royal court (a temptation the Hippolytus character never feels in H.D.):

Meantime Phaedra's young children draw from the seemingly unconscious finger the marriage-ring, set it spinning on the floor at his feet, and the staid youth places it for a moment on his own finger for safety. As it settles there, his step-mother, aware all the while, suddenly presses his hand over it. He found the ring there that night as he lay; left his bed in the darkness, and again, for safety, put it on the finger of the image, wedding once for all that so kindly mystical mother. And still, even amid his earthly mother's terrible misgivings, he seems to foresee a charming career marked out before him in friendly Athens, to the height of his desire.⁸⁹

In contrast to H.D., it is Aphrodite's chamber that Phaedra draws Hippolytus to when she attempts to seduce him ('you could hardly tell where the apartments of the adulteress ended and that of the divine courtesan began'⁹⁰). Ultimately she is unsuccessful, and Hippolytus remains (again contrasting to H.D.) separate from the excesses of the queen's royal court and erotic goddess ('as if he could be anything but like water from the rock, or the wild flowers of the morning, or the beams of the morning star turned to human flesh'⁹¹).

Things accelerate quickly in Pater's narrative at this point. Phaedra is reminded of Hippolytus' devotion (again there is a sexual hint with 'his alleged intimacy with the rival goddess'⁹²), and Hippolytus manages to escape the queen's 'sorceries' and Phaedra, in her jealousy and disappointment, accuses him of rape. Theseus curses his son and Hippolytus attempts to retreat back to the safety of his natural mother

⁸⁹Pater (2014), 233.

⁹⁰Pater (2014), 233.

⁹¹Pater (2014), 233.

⁹²Pater (2014), 234.

(‘he takes again to his former modes of life’⁹³) where he falls ill and his mother cares for him in a delirium that calls to mind the illness Phaedra suffers at the start of Euripides. When he recovers (‘a slow convalescence begins, the happiest period in the wild mother’s life’⁹⁴), there is hope that he might have been spared his father’s curse. There is to be no happy ending here and Theseus’ curse catches up with him as he returns victorious from a final chariot race in Troezen; however, as in Browning, there is hope for a resurrection at the very end of Pater’s essay.⁹⁵

3.5 Conclusion

The focus on Hippolytus and his relationship with Artemis, then, was clearly not an innovation of H.D., and in fact was a very popular way of reading the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, especially in literary circles. These authors were particularly interested in gender issues, and sexuality. Symonds, for example, was himself a gay man and many of his writings explored homosexuality using Greek poetry, most famously his *A Problem in Greek Ethics*. Foley describes Julia Ward Howe’s interest in gender politics across her work:

Howe’s earlier poetry books *Passion Flowers* and *Words for the Hour*, her controversial first play, *The World’s Own*, and her unpublished and unfinished novel (begun before *Hippolytus*), *The Hermaphrodite*, offer representations of sexuality and gender relations unusually frank for the period and remarkable for a married woman of her status.⁹⁶

Howe was far more interested in exploring gender ambiguity in her work, as Foley continues:

His androgynous aura would have underlined Howe’s own emphasis on Hippolytus’ combination of ‘feminine’ purity and impassioned asexuality with a masculine nobility and sense of duty. By contrast, the powerful, taller, and older Cushman, who was as successful in breeches roles as in roles such as Lady Macbeth, the gypsy Meg Merrilies in *Guy Mannering*, or Nancy in

⁹³Pater (2014), 234.

⁹⁴Pater (2014), 235.

⁹⁵Pater (2014), 237.

⁹⁶Foley (2015), 87.

Oliver Twist, and known in private life for her female companions, could have brought an ambiguous range of implications to her own part.⁹⁷

Connection to his dead mother and the feminine world of the goddess Artemis are part of Hippolytus' gender ambiguity, rather than methods of separating the hero from his masculinity, and creating conflict with his father. And as a woman trapped in a loveless marriage, with her own fluid sexual identity (much like H.D.) the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition becomes a way for Howe 'to explore what she clearly viewed as a tragic confinement in limiting gender roles during her youth and child-bearing and -rearing years.'⁹⁸

'Hippolytus Veiled' is one of Pater's series of literary portraits, which showed a particular interest, again, in defining masculinity. As Østermark-Johnsen indicates in her introduction to her edited volume of Pater's *Imaginary Portraits*:

As an aesthete *avant la lettre* Pater's Hippolytus joins the ranks of the other protagonists of his imaginary portraits: young, handsome men, driven to death in their obsessive pursuit of one particular goal or profession, be it painting, poetry, philosophy, collecting or military glory. Pater thus pushes the antecedents of this type of young man back into antiquity and expands his geographical territory eastwards.⁹⁹

Pater's Hippolytus is also allowed to grow away from his humble roots, and beyond his devotion to his mother and the goddess. It is his new-found appreciation for the world of Athens, where he learns his skills as a charioteer, that ultimately leads to his death. Østermark-Johansen draws a connection between Pater and Symonds in their interest in Hippolytus' unique type of masculinity, quoting Prins as follows:

There is complex sexual anarchy at work in Symonds's knight in shining armour: 'as the son of Hippolyta, the Amazon queen, he embodies a feminized masculinity born from a masculinized femininity. He is a male Amazon, recoiling from the heterosexual *eros* of Aphrodite and dedicating himself in 'the maiden-service of a maiden-saint' to the virginal Artemis.'¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷Foley (2015), 91.

⁹⁸Foley (2015), 93.

⁹⁹Pater (2014), 49.

¹⁰⁰Pater (2014), 53-4 (quoting Prins (2006)). Østermark-Johansen references a number of other influential translations of Euripides' *Hippolytus* between 1850 and 1900, including Mary Robinson's, which was dedicated to J.A. Symonds. Østermark-Johansen cites a description of Robinson in Prins

Both H.D.'s and O'Neill's Freudian perspectives enable them to take Hippolytus' connection to female and maternal forces to another level, amplified by a conflict with his father that is only fleetingly, if at all, present in these earlier renditions.

The Hippolytus figures in *Hippolytus Temporizes* and *Desire Under the Elms* are deliberately kept in their infantile states, the state that Pater's Antiope longs to keep her son in, for his own protection, but ultimately knows will be futile. H.D. even enhances the complexity of the Hippolytus character with her title, *Hippolytus Temporizes* giving the sense of her hero literally suspended between two worlds, between his father and his mother, between the masculine and the feminine, between the natural world and the royal court, between the warmth of home and the coldness of the outdoors, between a Father God and a Mother God.

There is no question that *Desire Under the Elms* and *Hippolytus Temporizes* are both distinctly Freudian dramas. We have seen how the Hippolytus figures, at least initially, are unwilling to sever the bond that ties them to their dead mothers and have deeply antagonistic relationships with their fathers. Not all of these themes are unique to H.D. and O'Neill; as this concluding section has explored, there are several other literary renditions from the late nineteenth century that focus in particular on Hippolytus' connection to Artemis and his relationship to his Amazonian mother. O'Neill and H.D., however, use a Freudian lens not only to amplify the connection Hippolytus feels to a dead mother (and his inability to escape from that child-like bond), but also to add the layer of conflict with the Theseus figure. Although the story of Hippolytus, Phaedra and Theseus is not the incest drama that most readers would associate with Freud, this chapter has demonstrated how psychoanalysis plays a significant part in both the scholarship on and the reception of the works within the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition.

(2006), using language that could equally apply to H.D.: 'Like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robinson translated ancient Greek in order to authorize herself as one of the most promising poetesses of her day. . . . She chose Euripides because of the tragedian's reputation for "feminine" lyricism, allowing Robinson to discover through his poetry a highly musical language of desire for her own poetry' (Pater (2014), 52-3.)

Chapter 4

Hippolytus' (homo)sexuality

*... essentially, of course this is the attraction between man and mother and a man and a man. I'm very afraid of this piece. It's a little controversial. But Europe took it very well.*¹

In 1983, when she was nearly 90 years old, Martha Graham composed her second ballet inspired by the the myth of Phaedra and Hippolytus, *Phaedra's Dream*, a short and controversial piece.² This ballet has only three characters: Phaedra, Hippolytus, and an anonymous figure called the Stranger. Although choreographed after her *Phaedra* (1962), this ballet functions as a prequel to the earlier work. Graham, as in the earlier ballet, delves into the world of Phaedra's psyche, this time having her heroine dream about Hippolytus being seduced by another man, The Stranger, who could be anyone, even, as some images suggest, Theseus.

As in Graham's earlier ballet, this is a tormented Phaedra, deeply disturbed by her rejection; but this ballet also explores the Oedipal relationship between Hippolytus and his stepmother (as we saw in the previous chapter), even importing movements from Graham's Oedipus-inspired ballet, *Night Journey*.³ A review of a performance of the ballet on 3 January 1984 speculates on where Graham got the idea for Hippolytus'

¹Martha Graham on her 1983 ballet *Phaedra's Dream*, quoted in Tracey (2001), 196.

²Her earlier ballet, *Phaedra*, a full length production, was choreographed when the dancer was 67, and was one of the last roles she danced; that first Phaedra ballet is discussed in §5.2.

³Kisselgoff (3 January 1984) writes: 'At one point Hippolytus folds up on the other man's thighs in the same dual child-lover embrace in which Miss Graham incestuously entangled Oedipus and his mother, Jocasta, in 'Night Journey.' And Noguchi's set design includes a slatted bed that looks remarkably similar to the bed he designed for *Night Journey*.



Figure 4.1: Martha Graham's *Phaedra's Dream*; image taken from Stodelle (1984).

sexual relationship with another man, writing, 'How Miss Graham arrives at the male love duet that is the center of her current piece perhaps only she can fully explain. And yet nothing in her work is ever arbitrary and, as usual, the original source gives her all the justification she needs.'⁴

Graham herself, as quoted above, acknowledged that the inclusion of a same-sex relationship on top of the incestuous desire between son and stepmother increased the controversy surrounding her second adaptation of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition. However, she was far from the first to explore Hippolytus' sexuality, and suggest homosexual attraction as a way to explain the prince's aversion to women and marriage. We can see hints of Hippolytus' problematised sexuality in much of the material discussed in the previous chapter. For example, Foley highlights the connections between Julia Ward Howe's *Hippolytus* and her unpublished novel *The Hermaphrodite*:

Hippolytus' merging of ideal female purity and spirituality with a masculine rationality and sense of duty also emerged in the hermaphroditic hero, Laurence, of her unpublished novel. Modeled on the statue of 'The Sleeping Hermaphrodite' whom Howe saw in the Villa Borghese in Rome, but inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the novels of Georges Sand, and Alphonse de Lamartine's long narrative poem *Jocelyn*, the hermaphrodite Laurence combines the best of both sexes, but can satisfy no one due to his 'monstrous' body.⁵

⁴Kisselgoff (3 January 1984).

⁵Foley (2015), 92.

Hippolytus, like Laurence, is caught between the masculine and feminine. In her analysis, drawing upon queer theory, of Ovid's myth of Hermaphroditus and Salimacis, Zajko argues how hermaphroditism, and problematised sexuality more generally, could be linked to homosexuality:

... there is considerable divergence amongst critics as to the constitution of their final form and the kind of etiology their story represents. One way it has been interpreted is as a myth that explains passive homosexuality in Rome; we are reminded in this respect of how in the contemporary world the categories of the intersex and the homosexual are often conflated.⁶

Zajko continues 'Ovid's myth can, then, be regarded as reinforcing a conceptual status quo that is built upon a two-sex model in which the figure of the androgyne is an abhorrence and a threat to the purity of the position of the fertile male.'⁷ In this framework, Hippolytus' aversion to sex calls his masculinity into question, and thus also his (hetero)sexuality.

This problematised sexuality adds a layer of complexity to Hippolytus that the types of Freudian analysis, utilised in the previous chapter, found hard to cope with. As duBois has pointed out in her article on the limits of psychoanalysis, Freud's analytical structure assumes heterosexual relationships. She cites Judith Butler's work *Antigone's Claim* as follows:

Butler implicitly accuses those who hold to such a view of failure of utopian imagination in their incapacity to conceive of other structures of common life, and of reinforcing compulsory normative heterosexuality by reiterating and reinforcing these norms.⁸

Psychoanalysis, thus, cannot fully take into account the complexity of Hippolytus' sexuality present in some readings of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition.

This chapter focuses on adaptations that explore and problematise Hippolytus' sexuality. I take as my key case studies Robinson Jeffers' two adaptations of the

⁶Zajko (2009), 189. The myth has other interesting resonances with Hippolytus, for example Salimacis is in some ways an inverse of Hippolytus – she is the only nymph not following Artemis, *solaque naiadum celeri non nota Dianae* (*Met.* 4.304, as quoted in Zajko (2009), 190), whereas Hippolytus is a rare male devotee of the goddess.

⁷Zajko (2009), 193. I will return to other Ovidian resonances with homosexual readings of the Hippolytus in §4.1.1 below. On the hermaphrodite and problematisation of sexuality, see also Freccero (1986).

⁸DuBois (2013), 329.

source material, *Cawdor* of 1928 (nearly contemporaneous with the psychoanalytical material discussed in Chapter 3) and *The Cretan Woman* of 1954. This chapter will build upon the psychoanalytical material discussed in the previous chapter, but will focus on how this particular strand of adaptations picks up on key issues surrounding Hippolytus' sexuality and the impact that has on his relationship with his stepmother. There are Oedipal tones here, no doubt, but Hippolytus' sexuality adds an extra layer of complexity to the incestuous relationship. We will see again how this analytical lens, whilst also present in scholarship on the source material, is prefigured in the source material's reception.

4.1 (Homo)sexuality in Scholarship

Many scholars have convincingly looked to ancient Rome as providing more fruitful ground for modern readings of homosexuality than ancient Greece.⁹ Ingleheart, for example, argues 'Rome allows for a multiplicity of different approaches. Therefore, Roman homosexuality and discourses of sex are open to a wider range of differing appropriations than Greek models are; Greece offers a more restrictive paradigm of pederastic pedagogy.'¹⁰ She continues: 'Rome provides fertile ground for those with a queer historical impulse.'¹¹ Queer theory is certainly relevant to this discussion; it acknowledges the wide range of sexual identification that cannot be captured in such inflexible terms as heterosexuality and homosexuality. This is one of the reasons my chapter title is 'Hippolytus' (homo)sexuality' to acknowledge that his sexuality can be read within a complicated range in the source material, scholarship, and reception of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition. Ormand makes some important observations on the connections between sexuality and gender as follows: 'sexuality and gender are mutually implicated discourses, even, or perhaps especially, in their most punitive

⁹One notable exception would be Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium* (189C - 193C), which presents a view of sexual orientation in fifth-century Athens. Aristophanes speaks of the origin of humankind, when there were three types, including the ἀνδρόγυνος or 'man-woman'. Aristophanes, interestingly for this discussion, also refers to men who lie with men as the 'manliest of men' (ἀνδρειότατοι ὄντες φύσει, 192A).

¹⁰Ingleheart (2015b), 34.

¹¹Ingleheart (2015b), 35.

modes. That is, gay men are often understood as “feminine” even if they’re butch as hell, and women can be assumed “lesbians” if they resist any aspect of patriarchal structure – say, being raped.’¹²

The discussion of (homo)sexuality is integrally related to discussions of masculinity, and, more specifically, what makes a ‘real man’ in both the ancient source material and the modern receptions. Hippolytus, as we have already seen, sits somewhere between the masculine and feminine, as a kind of hermaphrodite in terms of his relation to the opposite sex. As such his masculinity is easily called into question. Williams, in his book *Roman Homosexuality*, makes some important points on the connection between homosexuality and masculinity in the Roman context, which will prove helpful here:

Masculinity refers to a complex of values and ideals that can more profitably be understood as a cultural tradition than as a biological given; the concept refers to what it is to be fully gendered as ‘a man’ as opposed to merely having the physical features held to signify ‘a male.’¹³

Williams also cites the problematic nature of the terms, particularly when speaking of the ancient world: ‘The ancient sources, though, offer no evidence for a widespread inclination to assign individuals an identity based on their sexual orientation as homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual in the way that Western cultural discourses came to do later, above all after the emergence of the discipline of psychology in the late nineteenth century.’¹⁴ What seems to be of utmost importance is the role taken in a sexual relationship, as Williams continues: ‘Roman assumptions about masculine identity rested, as we will see, on a binary opposition: *men*, the penetrators, as opposed to everyone else, the penetrated.’¹⁵ This in turn is related to gender dynamics and patriarchy.

Williams goes on to discuss in some detail the range of traits that could call a Roman’s masculinity into question: ‘being penetrated was not the only practice that could brand a man as effeminate,’ and ‘effeminate men constitute a negative paradigm:

¹²Ormand (1996), 25.

¹³Williams (1999), 4.

¹⁴Williams (1999), 7.

¹⁵Williams (1999), 7.

in their failure to live up to standards of masculine comportment, they are what real men are not, and real men are what effeminate men are not.¹⁶ Williams identifies key terminology around concepts of masculinity as follows: 'the language of masculinity often invokes such notions as *imperium* ("dominion") and *fortitudo* ("strength"), whereas the essence of a weak femininity, embodied in women and effeminate men, is *mollitia* ("softness").¹⁷ This language appears in Ovid's tale of Hermaphroditus and Salimacis, most notably in the transformation scene (*Met.*4.380-6) where Hermaphroditus' limbs become soft (*mollita*), and he is also described as growing soft (*mollescat*).¹⁸ This kind of language is also used to describe Hippolytus in Seneca. As Pratt notes, Seneca's Hippolytus is an ambivalent character: 'As early as Episode I, the Nurse explains that his hatred of all women is derived from his Amazonian origin (230-32) in a monosexual mania reversing the Amazon's hatred of men.'¹⁹ Derivatives of *mollitia* are used three times in Seneca's *Phaedra*: by Theseus (line 922) and Phaedra (line 653) to describe Hippolytus, and by Hippolytus himself in his opening hymn to Aphrodite (line 22).

There was also a sense that masculinity was a state that had to be earned:

Along these lines Maud Gleason argues that 'masculinity in the ancient world was an achieved state, radically underdetermined by anatomical sex,' and that it 'remained fluid and incomplete until firmly anchored by the discipline of an acculturative process.' . . . The tenuous nature of achieved masculinity also offers an explanation for the easy interchangeability among the various traits that Roman traditions identified as effeminate. . . . The oppositional pair masculine/effeminate can be aligned with various other binarisms: moderation/excess; hardness/softness; courage/timidity; strength/weakness; activity/passivity; sexual penetration/being sexually penetrated; and, encompassing all of these, domination/submission.²⁰

Masculinity once earned was still subject to question, and possessing certain masculine traits might not be sufficient to overcome effeminate traits: 'in other words, if a man breaks just one rule, he loses the game; in the balancing act of masculinity, one stumble can ruin the entire performance.'²¹

¹⁶Williams (1999), 125-6.

¹⁷Williams (1999), 127.

¹⁸As described in Williams (1999), 128.

¹⁹Pratt (1983), 93.

²⁰Williams (1999), 141-2.

²¹Williams (1999), 142.

Hippolytus' sexuality is often discussed in scholarship, although suggestions of his homosexuality in particular are relatively rare. Charles Segal in his 1978 article 'Pentheus and Hippolytus on the Couch and on the Grid' applies a psychoanalytical and structuralist reading to Euripides' *Bacchae* and *Hippolytus*. For Segal these two plays 'enact the two poles of deficient or excessive sexuality'.²² The problematisation of Hippolytus' sexuality in Euripides, for Segal, is epitomised in the hero's death at the hands of Poseidon's sea bull, following his father Theseus' curse:

The remoter agent is the father in his anger and sexual jealousy who thus responds to a sexual threat from his son. His vengeance takes the form of that aggressive sexuality which Hippolytus had most feared and shunned. The symbolism represents what Hippolytus had most sought to avoid: it enacts his deepest anxieties, a confrontation with the male sexuality centered on Theseus, who is thus both the threatening, feared father and the embodiment of his own repressed sexuality.²³

There is also a sense that Hippolytus, in turning towards Artemis as a surrogate mother figure, has abandoned his proper 'male' sexuality, as Segal notes: 'a psychoanalytic critic might say that Hippolytus has dealt with his need for this remote and not very promising mother figure by denying his own sexuality.'²⁴

The location of Hippolytus' death, on the sea shore, also serves to emphasise his otherness. As Segal explains, 'Viewed structurally, the spatial symbolism expresses Hippolytus' anomalous position between God and beast, his failed mediation between Orphic vegetarian²⁵ in close communion with a virgin goddess and savage, carnivorous hunter.'²⁶ And the bull itself has its own connotations for Hippolytus' problematised sexuality, as Segal continues:

The shore where the catastrophe occurs is a place of potential mediation between sea and land, wild and city, bull and tame horses. But as the tran-

²²Segal (1978), 134.

²³Segal (1978), 136. The bull is a common image of male sexuality, and is often used to contrast with feminine or homosexuality, cf. Ingleheart on E.M. Forster's 'The Classical Annex' and Ovid's Pygmalion episode: '...the bull which causes the plaque of the nymph to break may represent male sexuality' (Ingleheart (2014), 8). Ingleheart cites the bull in Seneca's *Phaedra* as comparable to this image (Ingleheart (2014), 8 n. 25). Ingleheart also cites Euripides' *Hippolytus* in the same article, when discussing the power of Venus in the Pygmalion episode, Ingleheart (2014), 9 n. 27.

²⁴Segal (1978), 138.

²⁵On resonances with the myth of Orpheus, see §4.1.1 below.

²⁶Segal (1978), 138

sitional point of exile from the city it is the place where mediation breaks down in the overwhelming brute force of the terrifying and monstrous bull, embodiment of the threatening genital sexuality which Hippolytus has repressed.²⁷

Segal concludes by summing up his structuralist reading of the *Hippolytus* as follows: 'Structuralism concentrates upon the logical relations within society and in the cosmic order. ... in the *Hippolytus* they are called into question by the structural anomaly of the hero's place in society, his restrictive pursuits, and his limited religious and sexual orientation.'²⁸

Poole claims to make the first comprehensive study of homosexual love in Euripides.²⁹ He makes clear in his introduction that he follows Dover in his assertion that fifth-century Greeks were well aware of sexual orientation, however, he also emphasises that this did not mean they always wrote openly about it:

The same social conditions which made it easy to talk about and find acceptable expression for such feelings also made it easy for such feelings to be recognised when not made absolutely explicit. And herein lies a difficulty: for what remains inexplicit may be so either because it can be taken for granted without needing to be stated or because it has no existence at all.³⁰

However, Poole makes only two dismissive references to the *Hippolytus* in his chapter. Firstly, although he notes that Hippolytus' description in death suggests his potential as a object for male sexual attraction, saying 'the chorus lament (*Hip.* 1343f.) over the young flesh and fair hair of the mutilated Hippolytus', he quickly abandons this line of discussion by concluding 'but once Artemis appears on the scene, there is no further reference to his beauty because of the need to concentrate on his chastity.'³¹ In his second reference he all-but rules out Hippolytus' homosexuality as an element for further discussion, noting: 'Euripides put a high value on male friendship which lacked a homosexual dimension. Heracles and Theseus, who are likened to a father and

²⁷Segal (1978), 139.

²⁸Segal (1978), 148.

²⁹Poole (1990), 108.

³⁰Poole (1990), 109.

³¹Poole (1990), 123.

son (*Her.* 1401), Heracles and Iolaus, Hippolytus and his companions are all obvious examples.’³²

Craik, in contrast, makes a particular argument for Hippolytus’ homosexuality. Craik’s 1998 article builds upon the discussions of Hippolytus’ sexuality in the kinds of structuralist, social and psychological interpretations we have already examined to argue a particular homosexual angle. Craik summarises her argument as follows:

... a close linguistic analysis reveals that particular scenes and particular speeches in *Hippolytos* are charged with highly specific sexual language, germane to the play’s action, situation, and character, and especially to the presentation of Hippolytos himself: the young Hippolytos who fails to mature, to marry, and to take his place in society is presented in language which resonates with suggestions of the sexuality he denies. At first, this is under control and internalised (in the subtle imagery of the his own meadow speech) but ultimately it is out of control and in the open (in the more obvious symbolism of the messenger’s description of the bull’s epiphany from a spouting wave). The sexuality of Hippolytos is seen to have a peculiarly Greek and specifically homosexual slant.³³

Here Craik references an unpublished doctoral thesis submitted in 1994 at the University of Natal, whose author, Walter Hift, notes ‘to any modern psychiatrist the homosexuality theory would be the first to come to mind in observing [Hippolytus]’ but fails to develop that line of argument any further.³⁴ Like Poole, Craik acknowledges that these homosexual references are not always overt, saying ‘Euripides may be supposed to write consciously; and audience receptivity to these subsidiary connotations to vary from a conscious to a subliminal level.’³⁵

The *Hippolytus* is full of problematised sexuality, not least the unusual tendencies in Phaedra’s own family, starting with her mother’s passion for the bull and culminating in the queen’s own incestuous desires, although Craik notes that the extant *Hippolytos* ‘is more subtle in its treatment of Phaidra.’³⁶ Craik notes, as others have done, the highly sexualised language with which Hippolytus describes Artemis, ‘the one and

³²Poole (1990), 134.

³³Craik (1998), 30.

³⁴Craik (1998), 30, note 4.

³⁵Craik (1998), 31.

³⁶Craik (1998), 31.

only female partner acceptable to him.³⁷ Craik also notes Hippolytus' particular male beauty (referred to in passing by Poole in his chapter), citing in particular his youthful flesh and fair hair (also cited in Poole) noting that 'fair hair is an attribute more commonly of women, usually mentioned in contexts of youth and beauty ... it is also an attribute of children, especially in contexts of pathos.'³⁸ She extends her analysis to suggest that Hippolytus 'seems to be presented as an androgynous figure' and 'is aligned with female passivity at an impressionistic level' and, finally, 'his attachment to *sophrosune*, understood exclusively in terms of chastity, a virtue preeminently of women, and his devotion to Artemis, a goddess worshipped mainly by women, suggest a certain lack of masculinity.'³⁹

Craik goes on to analyse in particular the language used to describe Hippolytus' relationship with his hunting companions (which Poole dismissed as lacking in a homosexual dimension). She argues as follows:

... the expressions, and especially the verbs used, are appropriate to association in a sexual sense (1000, ὁμιλούντων) or even specific to the granting of sexual favours, in a common euphemism (997, φίλοις ... χρῆσθαι and 999, ἀνθυπουργεῖν ... τοῖσι χρωμένοις). ... At 108-13, after dismissing the old servant's warnings that he should pay attention to Aphrodite, Hippolytus tells the attendants to see to food and to groom the horses. The explicit literal sense is clear and unambiguous in expression, but the words have an implicit and latent force of implication: the language of satiety (overtly food) and of grooming (overtly horses) evokes the metaphorical language of love poetry.⁴⁰

Craik goes on to point out that words used by Hippolytus to describe his companions (ῥῆλικες and ὁμῆλικες) sometimes refer to homosexual relationships, citing examples from other Euripidean tragedies, Theognis and ancient comedy.⁴¹

Craik also develops the argument we have seen before, e.g. in Segal (1978), that Hippolytus' death at the hand of Poseidon's bull is highly sexualised, summarising the emergence of the bull from the waves as follows: 'With tumescence, erection, gasping

³⁷Craik (1998), 33.

³⁸Craik (1998), 35.

³⁹Craik (1998), 36.

⁴⁰Craik (1998), 37. On such resonances, in particular in relation to concepts of masculinity in love poetry, see Williams (1999), especially 154-159.

⁴¹Craik (1998), 37-8.

and foaming the monstrous wave ejaculates a bull, symbol of aggressive virility. The triple wave may be allied with the popular belief that the ability to copulate three times in succession was a sign of tremendous sexual potency.⁴² She notes in particular the use of *μαλθαρός* in line 1226, saying the word ‘is often used for “soft” in the sense of “unmanly” and, specifically, homosexual.’⁴³ She looks in detail at the language to describe how Hippolytus becomes tangled in the reins of his horses, and the reaction of his followers to seeing him torn apart, comparing the language to that used in Aristophanes describing sexual activity ‘in terms of a chariot and charioteers overturned with gasping breath.’⁴⁴ She concludes her analysis of the passage as follows:

Horses, then, may be understood as a metaphor for one kind of sex, homosexual, as opposed to another, heterosexual, represented by the bull: the stress on frontal or rear positions is important in this regard. The messenger speech may be interpreted allegorically, as a representation of an attempt to maintain the status quo (passive homosexual activity, or at least receptivity, represented by horsemanship), in the face of overwhelming forces precipitated by Aphrodite and sent by Poseidon (active heterosexual activity, represented by the bull from the sea): a virginal character meets a virile force and is destroyed in imagery of consummation.⁴⁵

Craik also makes a direct link between Theseus’ description of Hippolytus as ‘Orphic’ and the homosexual undertone, saying ‘in one strand of the myth Orpheus valued homosexual above heterosexual activities and it was for this reason that he died at the hands of the Thracian women, or maenads.’⁴⁶ This gives Theseus’ dismissive comment about Hippolytus as a ‘trader in lifeless meat’ (952-4), which on the surface can seem simply to refer to vegetarianism, an even more sinister, sexualised edge (especially when ‘meat’ is read as ‘slang for the especially female or passive; here amplified by ‘lifeless’ sexual parts): ‘In the extremity of his provocation, Theseus vituperates his son as a homosexual prostitute; that such a person should apparently have made an attempt on Phaidra is insupportable.’⁴⁷ For Craik, Hippolytus’ homosexuality is integral to

⁴²Craik (1998), 40.

⁴³Craik (1998), 41.

⁴⁴Craik (1998), 42.

⁴⁵Craik (1998), 42.

⁴⁶Craik (1998), 43.

⁴⁷Craik (1998), 43.

the emphatic rejection of sex that leads to his demise: 'Whereas the 'normal' – i.e. accepted – Greek male progression was from passive (homosexual) *eromenos* to active (homosexual and heterosexual) *erastes*, it seems that Hippolytos is stuck in the former phase. ... Hippolytos' fantasies about union with Artemis, divine and unattainable, and his repugnance from contact with real women, show Euripides' deep understanding of sexual inversion, far beyond a Greek context.'⁴⁸

The bull imagery is perhaps the most overtly suggestive of Hippolytus' homosexuality of all the images discussed so far. The bull, representative of male sexuality, in killing Hippolytus also metaphorically penetrates him sexually, casting Hippolytus in the passive role. The image of the bull is present not only in Hippolytus' death, but also in Phaedra's ancestry, as her mother Pasiphae was well known for copulating with Zeus in the form of a bull to produce the Minotaur. Taylor, in his article on Shakespeare's Ovid and Arthur Golding, makes some important observations about the image of the bull in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, where it comes up in banter between Claudio and Benedick. Both recall episodes where Zeus has sexual relations with a mortal woman in the shape of a bull; Claudio recalls the episode of Europa and Benedick recalls that topical episode of Pasiphae that produced the Minotaur:

Jocular though this exchange is, it is also an uncomfortable reminder of the play's icy, misogynistic undercurrent, its imagery of high born women satisfying their sexual appetites with cattle recalling the comparison of their sex with 'pamper'd animals | That rage in savage sensuality' (4.1.60-61).⁴⁹

Taylor sees in this exchange a reference to Arachne's tapestry in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 6, and in particular Arthur Golding's translation. 'As his romantic comedy draws to its end, therefore, Shakespeare is thinking of an erotic Ovidian tapestry which significantly became a spider's web when its creator met her eventual fate, and which for Golding, was an illustration of the depravity of the flesh and of the deceitful, degrading, and lustful nature of love for princes.'⁵⁰ The bull is thus cast squarely as the male aggressor; to engage in sex with a bull is to be dominated, and feminised, and also to give into

⁴⁸Craik (1998), 44.

⁴⁹Taylor (1994-95), 200.

⁵⁰Taylor (1994-95), 202.

strange, unnatural sexual desires.

4.1.1 Ovidian echoes

As we have already seen, there are important connections here to several Ovidian myths – that of Hermaphroditus and Salimacis and Arachne we have already discussed briefly; both Segal and Craik make reference to the Orpheus myth. Like Hippolytus, Orpheus was known to have shunned women (although for Orpheus this was later in life, after he failed to bring his wife Eurydice back from the Underworld), in his case explicitly in preference for young men; his death also has resonances with the *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchae*, as Orpheus too was torn apart in his death (like Pentheus, Orpheus is torn apart by women in a Bacchic frenzy⁵¹). These resonances make a brief discussion of Roman (homo)sexuality and definitions of masculinity fruitful for the issues under consideration in this chapter.

Orpheus, like Hippolytus, was also known for his misogyny, which Ovid explicitly links to his homosexual preferences later in his life, as Ingleheart notes in her close reading of the Ovidian Orpheus story in *Metamorphoses* 10:

Despite not giving a single, simple explanation for Orpheus' new pederastic preference, Ovid clearly connects it with Orpheus' simultaneous rejection of women, which is in turn linked with his marriage to Eurydice (80-1), and Ovid may thus imply the – to the ancient mind – extreme and unusual nature of Orpheus' exclusive pederasty. . . . This song treats, in Orpheus' words: 'boys. . . | beloved by gods, and girls by unlawful | passions thunderstruck, paying the deserved punishment for their lust' (152-4);⁵² Orpheus' misogyny, as shown by this comment (and expanded upon within his song), is much increased from Phanocles, although Ovid here takes a hint from

⁵¹See Ingleheart (2015a). The *Bacchae* provides a useful general point of reference for homosexual themes in the Hippolytus. For example, Fischer-Lichte speaks of the blurring of lines, sexual and otherwise, in the *Bacchae* as follows: 'At first the Dionysian annulment of difference seems peaceful. However, very quickly, it turns into an excessively violent de-differentiation. Any and all difference is abolished: the women adopt the most violent activities of men: to hunt and go to war. The men, in turn, become effeminate. Pentheus too dresses up as a woman. Even the difference between man and beast is erased. The women ambush a herd of cattle because they mistake them for men trying to spy on them. Alternately, they mistake Pentheus for an animal. The difference between gods and humans, too, seems to have vanished – that between Dionysus and Pentheus' (Fischer-Lichte (2014), 15). There are interestingly similar blurring of lines between (wo)man and beast in *Cawdor*, on which see §4.2.1 below.

⁵²Phaedra could easily fit into the category of women with 'passions thunderstruck' and having paid the 'deserved punishment' for her 'lust'.

his model; compare Phanocles, fr. 1.9-10: 'first among the Thracians he showed the love | of males and did not praise the love of women', which may simply imply that Orpheus took no poetic interest in heterosexual relations. Thus, Orpheus' misogyny, already attested in Plato, *Republic* 620a, is first connected in extant sources with his pederasty in Ovid, albeit with tendentious interpretation of Phanocles suggesting and authorizing the link.⁵³

Thus a link here is made between vehement rejection of women and preference for men. One could even add that these things appear linked to being unable to achieve the preferred union; for Orpheus this comes about as a result of his inability to rescue his beloved Eurydice from the underworld, for Hippolytus this could be read as his inability to achieve true union with his beloved goddess Artemis.

Many of the homosexual undertones in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were hidden for some time as a result of Arthur Golding's influential translation of the *Metamorphoses* first published in 1567. Ingleheart argues of the Orpheus episode that Golding's translation 'condemns Orpheus' turn towards boys' and continues:

his censure of Orpheus' pederasty arguably sets the scene for most encounters with this mythical figure for Elizabethan writers, who frequently treat Orpheus' myth but routinely ignore or excoriate its pederastic aspect.⁵⁴

Reception of the Orpheus character also has resonances with Hippolytus. For example, a 1595 epyllion *Orpheus His Journey to Hell* by 'R.B. Gent.' 'locates Orpheus in the countryside in a coterie of males who reject women'⁵⁵, which calls to mind Hippolytus' preference for male companions both in the source material as devotees of Artemis and the hunt, but also notably in Robinson Jeffers' *Cretan Woman*, which I discuss in detail in §4.2.2. R.B. also enhances Orpheus' misogyny: 'Orpheus does not simply reject women, however, but repeatedly attacks them ... 'invective Ditties daylie' suggests that Orpheus obsessively sings on this topic whereas, in Ovid, denunciations of women form just *one* of Orpheus' poetic themes. This calls to mind Hippolytus' tirade against women in the source material. A 1597 anonymous epyllion entitled *Of Loves Complaint; with the Legend of Orpheus and Euridice* even goes so far as to make a

⁵³Ingleheart (2015a), 59.

⁵⁴Ingleheart (2015a), 61.

⁵⁵Ingleheart (2015a), 63.

direct link between Orpheus' misogyny and his 'embrace of same-sex love.'⁵⁶ We see in these early examples a close connection between rejection of women, hatred of women, homosexuality, and ultimately, death as the Orpheus character's homosexuality can be seen to have caused his death 'as it is a major factor in the women's extreme violence against him.'⁵⁷ All of these are relevant to characterisations of the Hippolytus who, like Orpheus, presumed to shun and hate women, and suffered an untimely death arguably as a consequence of this behaviour.

4.2 Robinson Jeffers' Poetry

Although contemporaneous with Ezra Pound and the modernist movement (in which H.D. was also a key player), Robinson Jeffers made a conscious decision 'not to become a "modern".'⁵⁸ his long narrative style remained relatively old-fashioned and even his shorter poems did not explore the more experimental indirect style of his contemporaries.⁵⁹ Jeffers instead focussed his poetry on 'the isolated landscape of California's Big Sur coast and the simple, though intense, people of the foothill ranches that surrounded his home in Carmel,' as Tim Hunt discusses in his introduction to his edited complete collection of Jeffers' poetry. Hunt continues:

Some have wanted to assume he was a California original, a primitive, looking west from the 'continent's end' without realizing, or caring, what was behind him in New York or London or Paris. But Jeffers was not a primitive. Rather, the Calvinist faith of his minister father and his own immersion in the world of modern science helped direct his sophistication in a radically different direction from his modernist contemporaries.⁶⁰

Interestingly for the generational confusion explored in the previous chapter, and also present in Jeffers' poetry, Robinson Jeffers' father was 22 years older than his mother, although she was not a second wife and Jeffers had no step-siblings. Jeffers' father ensured he had a rigorous education with training in classical languages, and Jeffers

⁵⁶Ingleheart (2015a), 67.

⁵⁷Ingleheart (2015a), 73.

⁵⁸Hunt (1988), page xvii.

⁵⁹Hunt (1988), page xvii.

⁶⁰Hunt (1988), pages xvii - xviii.

graduated from Occidental College after only two years having studied astronomy, geology, biblical literature and Greek.⁶¹ After University, Jeffers dabbled in various graduate pursuits: a brief time at the University of Southern California; the University of Zurich, taking a range of literature classes; the USC medical school studying physiology; a year at the University of Washington studying forestry; before returning to Los Angeles in 1911 without having completed any graduate degree, but already having developed an interest in poetry.⁶²

Jeffers' inability to focus on a particular course of study was also undoubtedly influenced by his tumultuous relationship with a married woman he met at USC; when he returned to Los Angeles her husband found out about the affair. They divorced and she and Jeffers married in 1913; Una Jeffers (nee Call Kuster) would become a 'prime force' in her husband's life, and their decision to settle in northern California following the death of their daughter at only one day old, and the location, along with the traumatic life events he experienced, confirmed Jeffers decision to distance himself as a poet from the modernist movement:

To Jeffers ...the work of the early Pound and others seemed a poetry of fashion, and the world he had discovered in Carmel was anything but fashionable. It was, though, in Jeffers' view, fundamental, authentic, and relevant to the larger world. It offered the freedom to be regional without being provincial, which Los Angeles did not, and just as importantly, Carmel suited the energetic severity of his temperament at a time when his training in the sciences had freed him to respond to it. Just as importantly, this new, yet archaic, world seemed to require a poetry of moral seriousness at a time when his own personal experience and the reality of world conflict seemed to make such seriousness imperative.⁶³

It took some time for Jeffers' poetry to mature into its trademark focus on nature as a 'living organism' with humankind 'simply one of its elements, one of its expressions.'⁶⁴

Hunt continues:

Once Jeffers came to see the observation of nature and the observation of human actions, even perverse and violent ones, as inherently the same act

⁶¹Hunt (1988), xviii.

⁶²Hunt (1988), xviii - xix.

⁶³Hunt (1988), xxi.

⁶⁴Hunt (1988), xxiii.

of witness and to see the expression of them as a further witness to the inscrutable dynamism of nature, he began to overcome the dichotomy that had marred his earlier work. Poetry could not resolve, nor need it, the conflicts of nature or human experience. Poetry's task was to confront, reveal, and praise the grandeur of a universe in flux.⁶⁵

It was this newfound focus as well as exposure to Freudian material that led him to hone in on his trademark narrative style in the mid-1920s, leading to the publication of *Tamar* in 1924, a story of incest and destruction, which finally gained him recognition as a major poet.⁶⁶ The publication of *Tamar* was also followed by a period of intense productivity, which included a reworking of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, as *Tower Beyond Tragedy*, and the publication of his first *Hippolytus* adaptation, *Cawdor*, published in *Cawdor and Other Poems* in 1928. And even later in his career, when his poetry became more politicised and controversial, his work on Greek tragedy remained popular. His adaptation of Euripides' *Medea*, written in 1945 at the request of actress Dame Judith Anderson and produced for the stage in 1947 was a 'major critical and commercial success.'⁶⁷

4.2.1 *Cawdor*

Analysis of Jeffers' more direct second adaptation of the Hippolytus myth would be incomplete without first looking at his much better known and critically acclaimed first attempt to adapt the material in his narrative poem *Cawdor* of 1928. This earlier version shares many of the same psychoanalytical themes that we explored in the previous chapter via Eugene O'Neill and H.D.. Brophy (1976) describes in particular how myth and ritual were integral to Jeffers' work, and his adaptations of tragedy in particular:

An appreciation of the part played by myth and ritual in Jeffers' narratives illuminates the poems in two complementary ways: First, with regard to their dramatic structure, it exposes the basic ritualistic pattern of Jeffers' dramas, and second, with regard to the symbolic imagery, it highlights the

⁶⁵Hunt (1988), xxiii.

⁶⁶Hunt (1988), xxiv.

⁶⁷Hunt (1988), xxvii.

craft and organic unity through which the implications of the structure are projected. The myth-ritual approach, therefore, is seen as a key to Jeffers' poetic vision; it provides crucial insights into his celebration of tragedy.⁶⁸

Brophy introduces the key characters in *Cawdor* as follows:

The story's myth-source is the Greek play 'Hippolytus' as adapted here to an early twentieth-century Carmel-Sur ranch scene. The Theseus-Phaedra-Hippolytus cast is reconstituted with little alteration: Theseus is Cawdor, a roughly prosperous and secure rancher, just fifty, who has removed himself from men to preserve a sense of integrity. Hood (Hippolytus), Cawdor's son by a wife fourteen years dead, having quarrelled with his father and left the ranch-farm to be a hunter, has gone north to live a nomadic life with horse, gun, and camp-roll. Fera (Phaedra), a girl of nineteen, strikingly handsome but penniless, comes to Cawdor's ranch just as the story opens, driven by a fateful forest fire which has completed the ruin of her father. Because she is exhausted and confused and because she finds in Cawdor a hardness which suggests security, Fera soon consents to become the rancher's wife.⁶⁹

Brophy goes on to outline the structure of the poem, comprised of sixteen numbered but untitled sections of varying length, including four chorus-like breaks to the narrative (positioned in vaguely the same place as the choral odes are placed in Euripides).⁷⁰

The coastal Carmel-Sur setting is strongly evocative, with elements of nature (both animate and inanimate) featuring strongly throughout the poem, including the Native American history of the place (embodied in the minor character of Concha Rosas, Cawdor's former mistress). Fera, from the start of the poem, is associated with fire, and has an energy and instability that contrasts to Cawdor and his son Hood, who are often compared to stone. There are also strong animal images that pervade the poem – the caged lame eagle, wounded by Hood before he left the farm and kept in a cage being fed live squirrels by Hood's sister Michal; and the mountain lion, a literal presence that threatens the farm, but also is embodied by Fera, when she twice puts a lion skin on, first when Hood presents the skin to her as a wedding present on his arrival, and later, to actually become Hood's prey.

This poem is very much about conflict between father and son, which we saw is a key theme in psychoanalytical adaptations. As is the case for Eben Cabot and H.D.'s

⁶⁸Brophy (1976), 9.

⁶⁹Brophy (1976), 162.

⁷⁰Brophy (1976), 163 and note 4.

Hippolytus, despite the sons' attempts to distance themselves (either physically or emotionally) from their fathers, they cannot help but be intimately connected to their fathers. When Hood first returns to the farm, Fera remarks to Cawdor: 'He looks more like you . . . than either of the others.'⁷¹ Fera goes on to describe the connections between father and son, using the men's tell-tale image of rock/stone:⁷²

You can be cold, I knew that, that's Cawdor. The others
have kindly mother in them.
Wax from the dead woman: but when I saw your face I knew it was the
pure rock. I loved him for that.
For I did love him, he is cold and strong.⁷³

Fera makes clear that Hood is nothing like his mother; this is of course very different from Eben Cabot in O'Neill's play, who is intimately connected and associated with his mother, in contrast to his siblings.

Hood first shows himself as both averse and indifferent to women, saying to his sister Michal:

. . . Michal, keep your mind clean, be like a
boy, don't love.
Women's minds are not clean, their mouths declare it, the shape of their
mouths. They want to belong to someone.
But what do I know? They are all alike to me as mussels.⁷⁴

However, Fera clearly affects him in a way he cannot quite understand. Seeing her cut herself on a mussel shell, his reaction is described: 'He saw the white everted lips of the cut and | suffered a pain | Like a stab, in a peculiar place.'⁷⁵

⁷¹Jeffers (1928), 421.

⁷²Later, as Fera's desire for Hood grows, she goes into his bedroom after her father's death (perhaps reckless in grief) to proposition him. He resists, but Cawdor catches them together; in making her excuses, Fera speaks of becoming stone like father and son: 'I couldn't awake him. This | flesh will harden, I'll be stone too | and not again go hot and wanting pity in a desert of stones' (Jeffers (1928), 447). This is sort of an inversion of Phaedra's delirium at the start of the *Hippolytus*, where she longs to be a huntress, to take on some aspects of Hippolytus himself. And later, after her first suicide attempt, the rape accusation and Hood's death, Fera feels like a snake – a biblical reference no doubt – between the stone hardness of the two men, justifying her rape accusation to the younger sister Michal as follows: 'Not lies. Every word | Faithful as death. I lay between your father and your brother | Like a snake between the rock and stone' (Jeffers (1928), 482).

⁷³Jeffers (1928), 424.

⁷⁴Jeffers (1928), 425.

⁷⁵Jeffers (1928), 425.

Fera's connection to the mountain lion is a dramatic image throughout the play. Having wrapped herself in the mountain lion's skin when Hood first arrives, the image returns to her in one of the poem's many dream sequences:

Fera
 before the first thunderclap
 Dreaming imagined herself the mountain-lion that had killed the dog; she
 hid in leaves and the hunter
 Aimed at her body through a gap in the green. She waited the fire, rigid,
 and through closed lids
 Saw lightning flare in the window, she heard the crash of the rifle.⁷⁶

This foreshadows a later scene where Fera makes her first of two (unsuccessful) suicide attempts by donning Hood's mountain-lion skin, hoping to be literally hunted as a result of her obsession with and rejection by Hood.⁷⁷ Fera's first confession of her love to Hood is also marked with animal imagery, as she recalls dreaming of them as her two white horses:

Hood, listen, all afternoon
 I have been making a dream, you know my two white horses,
 They are like twins, they mustn't be parted.
 One for you, one for me, we rode together in a dream
 Far off in the deep world, no one could find us.
 We leaned and kissed . . .⁷⁸

The horse imagery is resonant of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, and in that sense foreshadows Hood's death, as the original Hippolytus died as a result of his horses being driven mad by the bull.

The problematisation of the relationship between Fera and Hood is foreshadowed in a conversation between two farmhands, where the words 'mother' and 'stepmother' get confused in the use of Native American dialect:

Concha answered inaudibly, and the other: 'You Indian.
 Not either you. I have read, you come from Ah-sia.

⁷⁶Jeffers (1928), 429-30.

⁷⁷The lion-skin returns again in another of Fera's dreams, foreshadowing the later scene of Fera's wounding when playing the lion: 'And in a snatch of sleep she dreamed that Michal | Had stolen her lion-skin, the one that Hood had given her, | And wore it in the hills and was shot for a lion. | Her dead body was found wrapped in the skin. | There was more, but this was remembered' (Jeffers (1928), 440-41).

⁷⁸Jeffers (1928), 438.

You come from Ah-sia, us from Europa, no one from here.
 Beautiful *matrigna* country, she care for Indian
 No more nor white nor black, how have she help you?
 There talk knotted itself on miscomprehension
 Until *matrigna* shaped into *madrasta*.
 'Beautiful stepmother country.'⁷⁹

The word 'confusion' returns later to Hood in a dream of his mother's burial: 'There an old woman servant, who had now been gone | These many years, prepared his mother's body | For burial; she was washing the naked corpse. | Matrigna; madrasta. He awoke and lay in the dark'⁸⁰

Fera finally makes her move on Hood when they go alone to cut laurel leaves for her father's grave, and it is an act of desperation – her wish to be loved by Hood makes her long simultaneously for death at his hands (like one of the animals he hunts). In the only reference to (potential) homosexuality in this version, she wonders about why Hood rejects her:⁸¹

. . . Ah. Is it men you love?
 You are girl-hearted, that makes you ice to me? What do you love? What
 horror of emptiness
 is in you to make you love nothing? Or only the deer and the wild feet of
 the mountain and follow them
 As men do women. Yet you could dip that little knife-blade in me for
 pleasure, I'd not cry out
 More than a shot deer, but I will never leave you
 Until you quit me.⁸²

Brophy (1976) describes Hood's reaction to her advances as follows: 'Even though they finally lie entwined in the leaves, Hood does not capitulate. Rather, in revulsion and fear, he drives the open knife into his thigh. This 'Attis-gesture' is an act symbolic of self-castration. By it Hood chooses impotence rather than defy his father's world.

⁷⁹Jeffers (1928), 437.

⁸⁰Jeffers (1928), 441.

⁸¹Zaller (1988) does not see any homosexual element to Hood, although he does recognise his effeminate nature, something that attracts Fera to him: 'Hood Cawdor is an Orestes without passion: He has renounced without ever being tempted. He is unlike his prototype, Hippolytus, in that there is no suggestion of homosexuality in him – indeed, no sexuality of any kind. A part of Fera's attraction to him lies in his unattainable hermaphroditic perfection, a beauty beyond sexuality such as the Greeks worshipped. Fera admires it: 'Your breast's more smooth | than rubbed marble, no hair like other men in the groove between the muscles, it is like a girl's | Except the hardness and the flat strength' (CAW, p. 35)' (Zaller (1988), 96).

⁸²Jeffers (1928), 463.

Carefully covering the blood-stain, he returns to the grave site; seemingly spent, Fera collapses in her room.⁸³

The conflict between father and son in *Cawdor* results in the son's death and the father's destruction. Cawdor kills Hood in an almost out of body experience, his body acting before his mind can comprehend what it is about to do:

... Hood with the rifle at his waist
 Unshouldered, flung up the muzzle and shot in the air
 Over his father's head: at the flash Cawdor
 Felt a bright fear, not of death but of dying mocked,
 Overreached and outraged as a fool dies,
 Explode on his mind like light breaking on blindness
 So that the body leaped and struck while the mind
 Astonished with hatred stood still.⁸⁴

Cawdor immediately feels regret, knowing deep down that his son could not be guilty of the accused rape. His words to convince himself that the act was justified are hollow and unconvincing:

He stood between the blanket-roll and the rifle
 Beside a few burnt sticks and scattered red coals
 On the bulge of the Rock. 'Well, I have killed my son.' Whether he
 continued living or quit living,
 It would be a pity Michal should know. Quit, because it hurts? He thought
 he was not the make to do that.
 His recent real temptation appeared a contemptible flourish of play-acting.
 'Well, I have killed my son.
 He needed killing.' The woman's story of rape was now believed; it had
 become needful
 To believe her story.⁸⁵

Like Fera, at least at this point, Cawdor is not strong enough (despite his physical strength demonstrated across the poem) to kill himself. And so he has to convince himself that what he has done was the right thing to do: 'Justice had been | Performed. He felt the sapping unbearable sadness | A little lightened, so muttered "Justice. Justice. | Justice.": but the third time of saying it the word | Was pithed of meaning and became useless.'⁸⁶

⁸³Brophy (1976), 190.

⁸⁴Jeffers (1928), 476.

⁸⁵Jeffers (1928), 478.

⁸⁶Jeffers (1928), 477.

Both Fera and Cawdor become more and more consumed with guilt for Hood's death, feeling responsible in their different ways. Fera uses the image of the bull to describe the conflict between father and son (referencing Hippolytus' death at his father's hands in the Euripidean source): 'Poor hunter. I set a beast on his track | That he's no match for. The gun's no good boy hunter, you might as well | toss acorns. Two bulls, Concha, | Fighting by starlight, the young one is gored.'⁸⁷ Later, after a second unsuccessful suicide attempt (this time, trying to hang herself, channelling Euripides' Phaedra), Fera visits what she assumes is the site of Hood's death, and claims responsibility for his demise: 'She rose and said to the grave: "It | was I that killed you. The old man | Who lives in hell for it was only my hands."⁸⁸ And Cawdor is indeed descending further and further into his own personal hell, consumed by his guilt yet paralysed into (atypical for the rancher-farmer) inaction.⁸⁹ Only when Fera reveals the truth of what happened,⁹⁰ is Cawdor moved to act, attempting to choke her but failing to complete a second murder when she begs for mercy.

By the end of the poem all of the main characters have been maimed in some way, like the lame eagle whom Michal keeps alive in its cage – Hood maims himself to escape seduction, although in the end it is futile as he is still killed by his father; Fera attempts suicide twice unsuccessfully and her shoulder is seriously damaged by Hood's shot when

⁸⁷Jeffers (1928), 483.

⁸⁸Jeffers (1928), 500.

⁸⁹It was true; and it was Cawdor that paid the suffering.
The woman found ease in words and outcry; the man,
The more sensitive by sex and by nature,
Had forbidden himself action because one act
Was grown his cancer; speech because speech betrays;
Even thought, in one regard, for if Hood's guilt
Were not monstrous the punishment became monstrous,
And if he had been solicited into adultery
His guilt was not monstrous but halved and natural;
There was evidence enough for that, and there
Thought was forbidden (Jeffers (1928), 500).

⁹⁰"One boy was honest and so you killed him. The boy
respected his father's possession.
He despised me, he spat me out. Then when I pressed him hard and set fire
to his body: the heart and soul
I never could reach, they were both stones: he took his hunter's knife in his
hand, he made the pain
Of the point in his flesh a servant against me. Into his thigh he drove it, he
laughed and was lame, and triumphed,
And limped into the darkness of death" (Jeffers (1928), 506).

he mistakes her for the mountain-lion; and finally, Cawdor, as the culmination of his extreme guilt at having murdered his son unjustly, blinds himself with the very flint that so symbolises his and his son's hard, cold personalities. However, unlike the eagle who is finally put down and achieves peace in death (via a long ode, published later as a separate poem entitled 'The Caged Eagle's Death Dream'), Cawdor must live with his guilt and blindness – his son offers him a gun at the close of the play, and he replies: 'What's this? Oh, | This thing. Keep it for cage-birds. | We have other plans.'⁹¹

4.2.2 *The Cretan Woman*

The Cretan Woman is a dramatic poem written with actress Agnes Moorehead in mind and published in *Hungerfield and Other Poems* in January 1954. It was first performed on the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. in May 1954 and then in July by the Provincetown Players.⁹² The Provincetown Players run was more successful, with Jacqueline Brookes in the leading role.⁹³ The play went on to have good success elsewhere in America, as well as in Europe.⁹⁴ Jeffers' writing slowed down considerably and was distinctly less popular in the years after the second World War, and the volume that contained *The Cretan Woman* was the last of his collected works published in his life time. It showed the signs of his failing health (he had nearly died of pleurisy on a trip to Ireland in 1948, when he started composing some of the poems published in the collection) and his wife's death from cancer in 1950.

⁹¹Jeffers (1928), 521.

⁹²Bennett (1966), 227.

⁹³Karman (2009), 111.

⁹⁴This is described in Bennett (1966), 232-235: 'In the summer of 1955, "The Cretan Woman" was produced at Stanford University as part of its summer theatre program, with Marian Seldes as Phaedra and Douglas Watson as Hippolytus. ... One of the most interesting developments of these years [at the end of the poet's life] was the success of Jeffers' work in Germany and in Czechoslovakia. From the excellent translations of Eva Hesse, the distinguished publisher Ernst Rowohlt presented an edition of Jeffers' three dramas, "Medea," "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," and "The Cretan Woman." ... In October, 1961, "The Cretan Woman," directed by Schalla, was staged in Bochum and was a signal success. Carmen Renate Koper, as Phaedra, won the plaudits of the critics and swept the audience of its feet, and Jeffers, as author, won his share of the laurels. ... In the meantime, Eva Hesse had introduced Jeffers' poetry to Mary de Rachewiltz, daughter of Ezra Pound, and suggested that she translate it into Italian. In February, 1962, her first translations – a series of ten poems – appeared in the Italian literary magazine, *Segnacula*. In 1963, her translation of "Hungerfield" met with instant success and resulted in a commission to translate "The Cretan Woman" for production.'

Coffin (1971) describes the impact of Una Jeffers' death on Jeffers' later poetry as follows:

The death of Una Jeffers in 1950 was a severe blow to the poet, for theirs had been a long and satisfying relationship, involving unashamed dependency of the poet upon his wife, as Jeffers was always ready to acknowledge. . . . In *The Cretan Woman*, another poem from this volume, Jeffers again took up Euripides' Hippolytus story. There are other poems over which the funereal presence of death hangs; in these the poet reiterated his preference for the beauty of things, the message that 'It is easy to know the beauty of inhuman things' (*The World's Wonders*)⁹⁵

Coffin goes on to summarise Jeffers' later work as follows: 'Together, the poems are a sobering indication that the poet is burnt out with nothing more to say, except to repeat his conviction that the beauty of things is preferable to man and his affairs.'⁹⁶

In this, his second Hippolytus play, Jeffers' makes his debt to the Euripides clear in a subtitle: 'Based on the *Hippolytus* of Euripides.' The setting⁹⁷ evokes the mythical past rather than the California coast, although the language used and some of the other character descriptions lend it a more contemporary feel. Jeffers preserves the role of Aphrodite but admits he was uninterested in Artemis.⁹⁸ The chorus, a group of poor women desperate for handouts to sustain their husband's drinking habits, open the play and their initially mundane conversation sharply changes when they feel the divine presence emanating from Aphrodite's altar: 'There is a divine anger in this place: like the glaring eyes of a wild beast. Yet she is kind we know. . . .'⁹⁹

⁹⁵Coffin (1971), 15-16.

⁹⁶Coffin (1971), 186. Other critics have cited *The Cretan Woman* as a noteworthy exception, cf. Everson (1988): 'And even toward the end of Jeffers's life, in the verse play *The Cretan Woman*, which does not evoke from the poet his greatest powers, one of the few passages that does touch the ancient wellsprings of his poetry is just such a plea from the lips of Phaedra' (67).

⁹⁷'In front of the house of Theseus at Troezen. Old masonry; big door, two or three stone steps up to it. Left foreground, stone altar of Aphrodite. Wooded hills in the blue background.'

⁹⁸See quote in Bennett (1966), 229.

⁹⁹Jeffers (1954), 316. Everson (1988) writes about divine wrath as a common theme in Jeffers' poetry, especially those inspired by Classical sources: '... many occasions wherein the profane mentality, when introduced by design or by accident into contact with the sacred, or even into its proximity, is overwhelmed by the numinous, or blasted by it, as we have seen with poor Uzza – or as was Acteon, who saw the goddess naked and was torn by the hounds. Jeffers draws on this aspect of the wrath when he recalls King Pentheus spying on the god Dionysus, to be torn to pieces by the women followers, among them his own mother. It is the same archetype touched on in Roan Stallion, when the profane Johnny overconfidently enters the corral, a confine made sacred by the stallion's breeding, and is struck down. A further instance in which the intrusion of the profane into the sacral order precipitates the outbreak of this wrath is *The Cretan Woman*, an adaptation of the Hippolytus of

Phaedra, as in Euripides, emerges from the palace in delirium, and is drawn to Aphrodite's altar. Like her Euripidean predecessor, she does struggle against the divinely inspired passion, although the closer she gets to the altar the harder it is to keep her passion hidden, and she is eventually compelled to reveal all to her handmaiden Selene and the chorus:

(to herself) I'll tear it out of me. Tear. Tear, you know: like a barbed spearhead out of my bitter heart.

...

[arriving at the altar of Aphrodite] *(in a strangled voice)* This is the one!

(retreating) The awful power

That has me in hand. The Goddess of love and longing, cruel, cruel and beautiful. I may as well confess now.

The crime is not great if I will not yield. – It is my husband's son by that Amazon woman.

It is Hippolytus.

I have long loved his beauty: but now the Goddess has thrown stark madness

Into my heart: *I want. I want* ... I will never yield to it.¹⁰⁰

Phaedra uses the word shame, a loaded term in the Euripides that also appears in *Cawdor*.¹⁰¹ Here the word is used to distance herself from the divinely inspired passion that she does not want: 'If you call it love! This loathsomeness in me. This disease. This burning shame.'¹⁰²

It is Selene who first alludes to Hippolytus' presumed homosexuality, in suggesting that he might not be a suitable lover for any woman, leave alone her mistress: '*(thoughtfully)* Hippolytus ... Is not the kind of young man for any woman to love. ... *(with slow emphasis)* He does not care for women.'¹⁰³ Hippolytus' homosexuality here is presented as a barrier to the successful fulfilling of Phaedra's passion (which, as we have seen, is clearly sent upon her by Aphrodite, as in Euripides); he prefers the company of his effeminate male companions (one of whom dies trying to save him

Euripides, wherein the youth, coldly critical of woman, is sacrificed to the indignation of the goddess of love' (Everson (1988), 58).

¹⁰⁰ Jeffers (1954), 319-20.

¹⁰¹ In Fera's initial approach to Hood in his bedroom, the word shame is repeated, 'but shame dies on the precipice's lips' (Jeffers (1928), 444).

¹⁰² Jeffers (1954), 321.

¹⁰³ Jeffers (1954), 321.

from his father's wrath at the end of the play). Jeffers claims he got this angle from his source:

As to my Hippolytus being homosexual – I thought I got a hint of it from Euripides. Anyways, it came to my mind and seemed appropriate. You don't write with conscious reasons but take what comes to mind.¹⁰⁴

There is a general sense of otherness, at times threatening, in most of the play's characters. Phaedra's Cretan history sets her up as a civilised foreigner in a land of uncivilised Greeks, although there is also a sense that Crete's glory is a thing of the past.

Theseus is a violent warrior who cannot control his killing impulse. Phaedra's assertion that she loves her husband towards the beginning of the play is mixed with fear of how he might react should he find out about her illicit passion:

... For I *love* him you know! Theseus I love. I have been fighting myself ...
He is – not young – if any person he loves should betray him ... When anyone's very young he can slide
From one lust to another, nothing is mortal: but a fierce man of war growing grizzle
Under his helmet: I know him: if anyone should betray him even in thought, He'd hate the world. – And when I look at ... his son ... my eyes
Scald with the stupid tears. – Die ... ah? No choice.¹⁰⁵

There is a sense here that she is having to try protest too much to remind herself and the audience that she loves her husband not his son. Her resolve to die is present throughout the play, although her conviction varies; and Phaedra will later use her husband's killing impulse to her advantage in engineering Hippolytus' death after he has spurned her advances. Critics have suggested that Jeffers used the Theseus character in particular to comment on the Korean war.¹⁰⁶ Phaedra later describes her husband as follows: 'An old gray man slayer; an old gray wolf, stinking of blood, destroyer | of generations. For fifty years you have been killing the sons of men – and now your own son.'¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴Jeffers as quoted in Bennett (1966), 229.

¹⁰⁵Jeffers (1954), 322.

¹⁰⁶Karman (2009), 108.

¹⁰⁷Jeffers (1954), 356-7.

Once Phaedra returns inside the palace, Aphrodite appears with the following stage directions: 'The women cover and shield their eyes. The Goddess Aphrodite has glided from behind a flowering bush, and leans her hand on the altar, her spot of light increasing. She is tall and very beautiful, marble white and marble-polished, but perhaps pale gold hair. She has a spray of fruit-blossom in her hand, and plays with it. She speaks as if she were alone, thinking aloud.'¹⁰⁸ Her speech is a paraphrase of the prologue of Euripides, but she is more human (if a bit uninterested) and expresses regret for the collateral damage to Phaedra ('young wife') and Theseus:

I shall have my way of him. The young
man [Hippolytus]
Will be taken care of. It is not right – nor safe – to be insolent
To a Great Goddess.
I am a little sorry for the lady Phaedra, his old
father's young wife,¹⁰⁹
Who must go down into shame and madness to make his ruin; and I am
sorry for the old hero,
Theseus, his father: but to suffer is man's fate, and they have to bear it.
We
Gods and Goddesses
Must not be very scrupulous; we are forces of nature,¹¹⁰ vast and inflexible,
and neither mercy
nor fear can move us.¹¹¹

Aphrodite then departs leaving behind the blossom-spray and the women come back into focus as if awaking from a dream.

Hippolytus then enters, with the stage direction: 'Hippolytus stands in the doorway, tall and young, dressed for hunting. He has a short heavy lance in his hand. He moves forward on to the door-step, his head held high, looking at the distant country. Another young man, slender and rather effeminate, comes from the door.'¹¹² The friends are jovial and close to one another, although suggestions of homosexual attraction are present in the stage directions, such as the use of 'effeminate' above, as well as some of the language used:

¹⁰⁸Jeffers (1954), 323.

¹⁰⁹Note the emphasis on the age gap here.

¹¹⁰An important word; nature is a force certainly in *Cawdor* as well as the adaptations we explored in Chapter 3.

¹¹¹Jeffers (1954), 324.

¹¹²Jeffers (1954), 325.

HIPPOLYTUS laying his arm affectionately around *Alcyon's* shoulders.¹¹³

...

I love my friends, Andros ... If they are brave and beautiful.¹¹⁴

...

[Hippolytus] makes a gay gesture of salutation *[to Aphrodite's altar]*.¹¹⁵ ...

The truth is:

I am a little cold toward the divinities

That are worshipped at night, with grotesque antics; the Goddess of

Witchcraft and the Goddess of Love –

Such a pair! Seriously, Andros:

The world is full of breeders: a couple in every bush: disgusting. As for me,

I'll spend my passion

On wild boars and wild horses.¹¹⁶

Here Hippolytus expresses a general dislike for divinities in general, as well as, at least on the surface, the Euripidean indifference/disapproval of sexual activity of any kind, preferring wild animals. The sexual undertones, however, especially if we think ahead to Craik's reading of the Euripidean text, are quite pronounced with the reference to 'passion' spent on 'wild horses.'¹¹⁷ Coffin (1971) speaks of the homosexual element of the play, and its mythical symbolism as follows, again dismissing any homosexual undertones in Jeffers' *Cawdor*:

Both the original Hippolytus and Jeffers' later adaptation of it in 'The Cretan Woman' emphasise this suggestion of homosexual inversion. Mythically it would symbolise one variation of the year-god (i.e., the earth's virile force) turning away from the earth goddess (earth's fertile receptivity) toward a sterile self-regard (homosexuality being symbolically parallel to Narcissism) with consequent (seasonal) failure of the earth's dynamism. Hood [the Hippolytus figure], however, is not homosexual but baffled and indecisive, overwhelmed by the world of self-assertion which his father represents.¹¹⁸

Although it is the nurse Selene who originally approaches Hippolytus, Phaedra dismisses her so that she can talk to the young man on her own. Their conversation turns from a general discussion of the Gods and whether one is compelled to bend to

¹¹³Jeffers (1954), 326.

¹¹⁴Jeffers (1954), 327.

¹¹⁵Jeffers (1954), 327.

¹¹⁶Jeffers (1954), 327.

¹¹⁷The sexual connotation of 'riding' comes up later when Phaedra refers to the Goddess: 'A Terrible one: she rides me' (Jeffers (1954), 334.)

¹¹⁸Coffin (1971), 214 note 34.

their will to affections more generally and some hints are given about Hippolytus' own sexuality:

HIPPOLYTUS: You are quite wrong [in response to Phaedra commenting on Hippolytus' coldness toward her]. I am not demonstrative perhaps ... I have affections
 Like other men; or perhaps more than others – and I am very glad that my father chose
 So good and beautiful –
 PHAEDRA: Let us not speak any more of your father: this concerns me. I only want you
 To be kind to me – as I would be to you – (*She breaks off.*) I think so much of my childhood lately,
 In the high sacred island, in my father's palace,
 Beautiful Crete; we used to play a game there called hide-'n'-seek: there was room there: one of my sisters
 Got lost in the endless echoing corridors, the famous Labyrinth: we hunted her for hours, we could hear her crying
 Pitifully, far off ... Hunt me, Hippolytus!
 You are a great hunter, it is your life,
 Hunting wild beasts in the black woods: can't you hear me crying? I am lost, I am lost, I am crying
 Pitifully¹¹⁹

The conversation is scattered with references to Phaedra's own sense of otherness, as a foreigner, which creates a sort of identification or connection between her and Hippolytus, who is also different on account of his sexual preference. Here we also see echoes of the Senecan Phaedra, who longs for Hippolytus to pursue her even after death, in the underworld. And in Jeffers' earlier *Cawdor* we have seen how Fera literally transforms herself into the hunted animal by donning the mountain lion's skin and stalking through the woods waiting for Hood to shoot her.

The scene also makes a contrast between Phaedra's hotness and Hippolytus' coldness (similar to the contrast between Fera's connection with fire and Hood and Cawdor's connection with stone/rock/ice in *Cawdor*). Hippolytus responds to Phaedra's longing to be his prey, confused, and she clarifies:

No: you can't understand. You think I have something monstrous hidden in

¹¹⁹Jeffers (1954), 331.

my mind.¹²⁰ It is not true.
 Kindness I want. Only kindness: is that a monster? Why do you hate me,
 Hippolytus? All cold, all angry.¹²¹

The stage note indicates that Hippolytus first 'turns sharply away' from Phaedra, but then turns back to reply as follows:

You are mistaken in that, Phaedra. I have felt kindness
 ... I will confess it:
 In my manner I loved you. The way you moved, and your mind and soul. I
 have thanked God that my nature
 Is not ... *inclined* toward women: or I might have loved you
 Beyond what's right. Oh, I could conquer it: we know how to rule
 ourselves, we have self-control; we are not leaves
 Blown by the wind!
 But it might have been painful!¹²²

In *Cawdor*, Hood used his hunting knife to stop himself from succumbing to Fera's passion, symbolically castrating himself; here Hippolytus does not need so dramatic a defence as his sexuality protects him from the Queen's passion. Hippolytus' assertion that he need not be controlled by the will of the gods, and his assertion of his own self-determination, is another theme running throughout the poem.

Phaedra replies to him referencing her Cretan ancestry (and otherness) as at least part justification for her actions and desires (and we see here how she, and her people, are hot-blooded, contrasting to Hippolytus' coldness):

... we Cretans
 can be passionate still. We have hot blood, we love beauty, we hate
 bigotry,
 We know that good-and-evil and virtue-and-sin – are words, tired words:
 but *love* is more beautiful than sunrise
 Or the heart of a rose: the love of a man and a woman can be more beautiful
 than the great-throated nightingale
 Her heart-break song: when all the leaves of the trees hang still to hear it,
 and the stars in hushed heaven
 Hold their breath and lean lower. – Ours could be. *Our* love could be.¹²³

¹²⁰She does, in fact: the goddess Aphrodite's cursed passion.

¹²¹Jeffers (1954), 332.

¹²²His words could be describing Phaedra's own struggle here. Jeffers (1954), 332.

¹²³Jeffers (1954), 333.

The Queen's Cretan ancestry is further referenced, first by Phaedra herself to explain her mad passion (calling to mind again the Senecan Phaedra's *furor*) – '... not so mad as my mother who went insane with the love of a black bull, that snuffling horror – I know well enough all the shames of my race'¹²⁴ – and later by Hippolytus, as a way to exonerate her from her actions – 'Observe her, women [to the chorus]. ... She is clearly insane; not responsible; not to be blamed. ... You know the taint in the blood – curse, if you call it so – on the royal family of rich Crete –'.¹²⁵

At this point, Phaedra calls upon Hippolytus to end her life by stabbing her with his hunting spear (a phallic wish fulfilment that is also present in the source material and other adaptations, as we have seen). Hippolytus here calls to his defense not just his sexuality, but also his honour (Hood's key defense in *Cawdor*), saying to the Queen: 'it is true, you are very beautiful; and I could love you ... in spite of nature ... But not of honor. That holds me.'¹²⁶ Phaedra still tries to convince him, in a last desperate attempt:

(embraces his knees) I am so thirsty for you, Hippolytus!
 I am burning alive. Forget your father: forget your honour and mine, what do they matter? Forget
 Your impediment of nature. I have put life and death on this throw of the dice: and degraded myself –
 I am not insane. I have loved you a long while. I have degraded myself –
 Take this degraded body here kneeling to you. Do what you like: love it or kill it. Oh –
 Lift it up: love it! *(She embraces his knees.)*¹²⁷

At this point, Hippolytus' pity and sympathy run out; he bids the Nurse Selene to take Phaedra inside and returns to his friends, who have by now come to summon him to the hunt. Phaedra is both angry and ashamed at her actions, referring to herself a whore several times.

It is then revealed that Theseus has returned home early, having heard a rumour that his house is burning (it was in a way, though not literally, as we have seen).

¹²⁴Jeffers (1954), 334.

¹²⁵Jeffers (1954), 335.

¹²⁶Jeffers (1954), 336.

¹²⁷Jeffers (1954), 336.

Phaedra and the chorus of women resolve to keep quiet and not reveal what they have witnessed between the queen and the prince. However Phaedra is unable to keep silent when questioned by her husband, despite the Nurse's assurances that all has been fine at home. She reveals the Nurse has lied and claims that she has been raped, although at first she will not reveal by whom. Phaedra hopes that her revelation will lead Theseus, in his typical rage already referred to, to kill her instantly. However, he demands to know who has done the deed; her refusal to tell him makes him extremely angry (the stage directions refer to him as 'staggering with rage', 'shouting', and 'black with rage, controlling himself').¹²⁸ Phaedra describes the episode of her rape in great detail,¹²⁹ almost provoking him, and finally 'accidentally' reveals Hippolytus' identity, recalling how she said to her attacker: 'Though my life and honor are nothing to you, Will you dishonor your father Theseus, whose wife I am?''¹³⁰ Theseus at first blames Phaedra, and then demands that Hippolytus is brought to him – Phaedra smiles a little and it seems she has now discovered a way to end her own life (she has not yet realised the impact this will have on Hippolytus).

Phaedra seems to feed off Theseus' rage, and his history of violence as a warrior:

(*almost brightly*) How many people have you killed in all your life,
Theseus? Three hundred?
With your own hand?
That's what they call a hero. That's what they call a great man. Kill, kill,
and kill:
They put up statues.¹³¹

Phaedra is happy now that she feels her own death is certain; however, just as Theseus moves to kill her, she changes her tune (like Fera, at least at first, she is unable to orchestrate her own death):

Would I – or any woman – willingly embroil myself with a young man well
known

¹²⁸Jeffers (1954), 344-5.

¹²⁹A similar thing is done with movement in Martha Graham's second Phaedra ballet, where the queen dances her rape, as a kind of wish fulfilment, by enacting it making it seem like it actually happened.

¹³⁰Phaedra's use of the word 'honor', which was Hippolytus' defence against her, is ironic here. Jeffers (1954), 346.

¹³¹Jeffers (1954), 347-8.

Averse from women? Think what you like of me – dearest, don't strike! –
 I am not such a fool. Hippolytus is that sex – higher or lower, I know not,
 but strange –
 That loves its own¹³²

Having first referenced Hippolytus' honour, she now uses his sexuality as her defense. Theseus becomes softer and decides to wait to hear Hippolytus out, reflecting on how he once loved his wife and hoping this will all turn out to be a dream. The lull, however, is short-lived. Hippolytus asks the women to bear witness to his innocence, but they are too afraid to speak; Selene backs her mistress and Theseus believes them. Alcyon, one of Hippolytus' hunting companions, struggles to come to his friend's aid, at one time screaming: 'Stop! Kill her: kill Phaedra: she is the one –.'¹³³ Theseus instead stabs his own son, saying with stage direction: 'You model of chastity!' (*He shifts his sword with skilled suddenness, drives it under the breast-bone, from below upward.*)¹³⁴ Alcyon in turn is killed by the guards, trying to come to Hippolytus' dead body, with derogatory remarks about his sexuality: 'Woman-boy, huh?'¹³⁵

After Theseus has killed Hippolytus, Phaedra longs for the cold and dark of her own death, contrasting to her previous heat and light (similar to the way that Fera feels herself turning to stone when she is first rejected by Hood):

I wish the long black ship
 that brought me here
 Had split on the sharp reef in the raging storm. I wish my bones were
 churning unfleshed forever,
 White in black water, out of the sun, wide-washed, far-apart-scattered; and
 slime-running seaweed – Those cold black leaves – grew where my blood
 runs – where my heart
 beats – here in the ribs – here –
 Where your red sword should rest soon. – You were so beautiful,
 Hippolytus, you were so beautiful!
 I sought you as a brown seeks the bright flame:¹³⁶ or as the young
 darkness
 Loves the evening star: or a starved beast his prey. I was that beast. On
 my

¹³²Jeffers (1954), 350.

¹³³Jeffers (1954), 355.

¹³⁴Jeffers (1954), 356.

¹³⁵Jeffers (1954), 356.

¹³⁶Here roles have been reversed and Hippolytus is the flame.

knees I hunted you.
 You have died: who can live?¹³⁷

Phaedra then leaves Theseus to mourn his son. Theseus prays to Neptune for his son to live, but in vain. There are cries from the house, suggesting someone has died and it is revealed by Selene that Phaedra has hanged herself (unlike Fera, she is successful in her second attempt).

Theseus, once the great warrior, is full of regret (like Cawdor) and vows never to raise his sword again.

She was in trouble and I did not help her. Indeed I never understood her;
 she was too beautiful for me,
 Her mind moved like a bird.
 And now I have to go down all alone in blood, having lived in it, alone to death,
 Having loved deeply. As to – my dear, dear son –
*(He looks down at the body, gives an animal cry of pain, flings himself onto the body. The scene begins to darken.)*¹³⁸

Aphrodite closes the play, warning humanity against becoming too secure in its power:

In future days men will become so powerful
 That they seem to control the heavens and the earth,
 They seem to understand the stars and all science –
 Let them beware. Something is lurking hidden.
 There is always a knife in the flowers. There is always a lion just beyond the firelight.

In an inversion of the end of the Euripidean version, Aphrodite has the final word, and she comes across as almost childlike and immature, with humans as her playthings. The use of the words 'lion' and 'firelight' also remind us of Jeffers' previous adaptation, where the Phaedra character Fera was identified with both of these things. The ending of this second version is perhaps a reflection of Jeffers own ambivalence about life and death towards the end of his life, having lost the woman he most cared about.

¹³⁷Jeffers (1954), 357-8.

¹³⁸Jeffers (1954), 362.

4.3 Conclusion

Whether we choose to follow Craik (1998) in her assertion that homosexual undertones are present in the language and imagery of the Euripidean original, or Poole (1990) in his certainty that the *Hippolytus* is not one of the plays in which Euripides explores the tensions of homosexual life that the playwright might have faced in his own life, the homosexual angle is clearly an important one in discussing the problematisation of *Hippolytus*' sexuality in the mid-twentieth-century adaptations of the *Hippolytus* and *Phaedra* myth. The Roman definitions of homosexuality, and in particular masculinity, as well as recent scholarship on homosexual themes in Ovid have also proven helpful in drawing out some of the language and characterisation that are picked up in both the source material and adaptations that problematise *Hippolytus*' sexuality. I close with a brief discussion of censorship surrounding homosexual readings of ancient material, for which Ovid will provide another useful lens for considering these issues in relation to the adaptations under discussion in this chapter.

For certain authors, ancient material provided a way to explore homosexual themes in safety, as Ingleheart explains in her article on E.M. Forster's 'The Classical Annex' and resonances with Ovid's *Pygmalion*:

The Classical world provided Forster, then, with an idealized alternative to contemporary society. One of the aspects of antiquity that most interested Forster, as a homosexual man at a time when sexual acts between men were reviled by society and forbidden by law, was the frank acknowledgement and even celebration of same-sex love in many ancient sources. ... Forster was hardly alone in such a response; Linda Dowling's excellent *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (1994) has charted the role played in Victorian culture by the reception of the Classics – and in particular, ancient Greek and Greece – in legitimating love between men.¹³⁹

Like certain plays containing incestuous content, works of homosexual content also were subject to censorship. Forster's 'The Classical Annex', although written in the 1930s (contemporaneous with Jeffers' first *Hippolytus* play), was not published until 1972, 'two years after Forster's death and five years after male homosexuality was

¹³⁹Ingleheart (2014), 2-3.

decriminalized in England.’¹⁴⁰ Ingleheart also reads Forster’s ‘The Classical Annex’ as a commentary on his society’s treatment of homosexual themes and homosexuals: ‘Forster emphasizes that Classical culture is not always safe in the hands of the professionals who are supposed to be its guardians, but who instead seek to censor the presence of homosexuality in the ancient world.’¹⁴¹ Forster’s novel *Maurice* was also self-censored, written in 1913-14 but never published by the author because of its ‘homosexual theme.’¹⁴²

John Addington Symonds, whose work on Euripides we looked at in §3.4, also experienced censorship of his work on homosexuality; his work *Sexual Inversion*, co-authored with the ‘eminent English sexologist’ Havelock Ellis, was published in 1897 but ‘promptly banned as obscene’. The work ‘is now widely recognised as the first sustained study of English homosexuality.’¹⁴³ Funke and Langlands, in their essay on the *Sexual Inversion* go on to explain the authors’ motivations, as revealed in their correspondence:

Their letters clearly show that both Ellis and Symonds were keen to present an affirmative discussion of homosexuality that would, in Ellis’s words, lead its reader to ‘a sympathetic or at all events intelligent point of view’ (Ellis/Symonds (2012) 256 (letter from Ellis to Symonds, dated 3 March 1893)). Moreover, both authors sought to challenge the criminalization of homosexuality in England under the 1885 Labouchere Amendment.¹⁴⁴

Censorship of homosexual themes in Greek and Roman scholarship and reception has even deeper roots. Edward Gibbon in Volume 4 of his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, completed in 1776, is unable even to name homosexuality: ‘I touch with reluctance, and dispatch with impatience, a more odious vice, of which modesty rejects the name, and nature abominates the idea.’¹⁴⁵ Ingleheart also cites the example of Jeremy Bentham’s essay ‘Paederasty’, which ‘was written around 1785, arguing for reform of the law in England which prescribed the death penalty as the

¹⁴⁰Ingleheart (2014), 4.

¹⁴¹Ingleheart (2014), 14.

¹⁴²Ingleheart (2015b), 2-3.

¹⁴³Funke and Langlands (2015), 110.

¹⁴⁴Funke and Langlands (2015), 110-11.

¹⁴⁵As quoted in Ingleheart (2015b), 14.

punishment for sodomy, but owing to its subject matter remained unpublished until 1978.¹⁴⁶ Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'A Discourse on the Manners of the Ancient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love' was written in 1818 'but was not published in its entirety until 1931, and then only in a run of a hundred copies.'¹⁴⁷

We have in this chapter looked at two artists who have turned to the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition twice in their careers. In Jeffers' *Cawdor* and *Cretan Woman* we have seen how homosexual tones only hinted at in the earlier play are drawn out much more explicitly in the second play. Homosexuality is surely hinted at, if not made explicit, in Martha Graham's original *Phaedra* of 1962,¹⁴⁸ and in *Phaedra's Dream* she seems simply to explore a notion she had in 1962 in more depth. Graham was also undoubtedly influenced by the Jeffers' adaptations; we know that she was familiar with Jeffers' work, since his Clytemnestra-inspired poem *The Tower Beyond Tragedy* served at least in part for the inspiration behind her own ballet, *Clytemnestra*. Perhaps the nightmare in which Phaedra finds herself in *Phaedra's Dream* is inspired by the suggestions of homosexual tendencies in Jeffers' play, thus providing a motivation for the dramatic accusation of rape in her earlier *Phaedra*. It is also surely no accident that both artists only felt able to explore (homo)sexual themes in their work at a time when, with the start of the so-called 'sexual revolution', such themes were becoming more acceptable in wider society.

¹⁴⁶Ingleheart (2015b), 15-16.

¹⁴⁷Ingleheart (2015b), 16-17.

¹⁴⁸In *Phaedra* the body of Hippolytus is borne off the stage by a group of scantily clad male dancers. For full analysis of this ballet see §5.2

Chapter 5

Phaedra as Diva

*The moment I have put on the veils of Phèdre I think only of Phèdre; I am Phèdre and I am left shattered by the performance.*¹

*When Sarah plays Phèdre, we are all incestuous.*²

The power of the Phaedra character is well exhibited by Sarah Bernhardt's famous portrayal of Racine's *Phèdre* in the 1870s; for her taking on this role was an acutely physical and emotional experience, described by Richardson (1977) as follows:

If Rachel recalled the statues of ancient Greece, Sarah conjured before the eyes of the audience the living woman of antiquity, and she had no need to study her sobs. Her tears were always close to the surface, and they flowed easily, with heart-breaking realism. Sarah would always abandon herself to Phèdre as she abandoned herself to no other part. Perhaps her supreme achievement was her Phèdre. When she played Phèdre she always needed to prepare herself with a long interval of quiet reflection. But, as Maurice Baring was to write, from the moment she staggered onto the stage, trembling under the load of her unconfessed passion, 'the spectator witnessed the building up of a miraculous piece of architecture in time and space, and followed the progression, the rise, the crisis, and the tranquil close of a mysterious symphony.'³

Bernhardt's performance was so famous throughout the world that a sonnet was even written for her by José-Maria de Heredia in 1894 called *L'égarement de Phèdre*.⁴ Bernhardt described her first performance of the *Phèdre* to an English audience as follows:

¹Sarah Bernhardt as quoted in Stokes et al. (1988), 51.

²The poet Rostand as quoted in Stokes et al. (1988), 24.

³Richardson (1977), 57.

⁴Reid (1993), 885.



Figure 5.1: Sarah Bernhardt as Phèdre, image taken from Stokes et al. (1988).

I suffered, I wept, I implored, I cried: all of it was real; my suffering was horrible, the tears that flowed were burning and bitter. I implored Hippolyte for the love that was killing me, and the arms that I stretched out to Mounet-Sully were the arms of Phèdre, tense with the cruel longing to embrace. The god had come.⁵

Bernhardt vividly remembered when she was first asked to take on the role, describing her experience as follows: ‘One day, Perrin came to see me in my sculptor’s studio. He began by chatting about my busts, and said I should do a medallion of him; and then, as if by chance, he asked if I knew the part of Phèdre. Until then I had only played the part of Aricie, and the part of Phèdre seemed formidable. None the less, I had studied it for pleasure. “Yes, I know the part. But I think that if I had to perform it, I should die of fright.” He laughed, his little nasal laugh, and said as he kissed my hand (for he was very gallant): “Work on it, I think that you will play it.” And indeed, a week later, I was summoned to the director’s office, and Perrin told me that he was announcing *Phèdre* for 21 December, Racine’s birthday, with Mlle Sarah Bernhardt in the title-role.’⁶

Bernhardt identified with Phaedra and made her real to her audience; she was

⁵As cited in Richardson (1977), 78-79.

⁶As cited in Richardson (1977), 56.

both the essence of feminine power and a highly sympathetic figure. One spectator at the English première described the final curtain call and the overall impact of the performance with these words: ‘When she advanced alone to the footlights in the speech in which she acknowledges and laments her unhappy love – there was deep silence. No one could clap; we could only pant and clench our hands. The slow, emphatic declamation, the small white muscular face, were too impressive – the tragedy appeared too awful a reality.’⁷ The intensity that Bernhardt applied to the role must be kept in mind as we explore the various Phaedras who danced and sung their hearts out in the adaptations under discussion in this chapter. There is something about Phaedra that demands this kind of passion, a passion that is written into the very fabric of these adaptations, where Phaedra dominates with her movements and her voice, expressing her innermost sensibilities, motivations, and desires, and dying with such a heartbreaking dramatic intensity. What was uncomfortable for the late 19th-century stage audience became all the more bearable and enchanting in the genres of opera and modern dance, where the actual words are either more difficult to understand or not present at all, and the audience can be taken in by the enchanting power of the female lead as she fights against her unwanted passion.

In this chapter, I explore both the literal and metaphorical ‘envoicing’ of Phaedra characters in opera and dance adaptations, looking at the concept of the female diva. In these media, Phaedra becomes the *Fedra indementicabile* of Ildebrando Pizzetti’s 1915 opera *Fedra* (on which see §5.1.1 below). Particular texts under discussion will include Martha Graham’s controversial ballet, *Phaedra* of 1962, George Roumanis’ little-known opera *Ode to Phaedra*, composed between 1973 and 1978, but reaching popular audiences through a filmed version for television that premiered in 1995. Finally, I will discuss Benjamin Britten’s *Phaedra*, a dramatic cantata for mezzo-soprano and small orchestra, using words from a verse translation of Racine’s *Phèdre* by Robert Lowell, first performed by Jane Baker and the English Chamber Orchestra in June 1976 and recently performed with choreography by Richard Alston as part of Britten’s centenary

⁷As cited in Richardson (1977), 79.

celebrations at the Barbican in London.

5.1 The ‘envoicing’ of Phaedra

Female actresses have a complicated history, as alluded to in our brief discussion of Sarah Bernhardt above. For a woman to act passionately on stage was a complicated dynamic which both gave her power and emphasised women’s dependence on men.⁸ Foley makes just this point when discussing the contribution of the late nineteenth-century American actresses Charlotte Cushman and Mathilda Heron, whom she describes as ‘successful in inaugurating a new focus on female passions (especially in defence of self or family) that arguably served to affirm the need for male domination of women.’⁹ Bernhardt was best known for her impassioned portrayal of female characters:

In many ways Bernhardt’s melodramatic heroines (Sardou as well as Dumas *filles*) aren’t ‘women’ either. Neither are they monsters, but they do exist outside of the common order. Their eroticism is exceptional and Bernhardt needed that dimension because it suited the extravagant qualities of her acting style.¹⁰

We see here the danger that came from portraying women in such a way, a way that questioned these characters’ status as somewhere between women and monsters.¹¹ Bernhardt’s portrayal contrasted to her contemporaries, most notably the English actress Ellen Terry and the Italian actress Eleanora Duse: ‘Ellen Terry lives on as the eternal girl-actress, the symbol of health, youth and energy, in contrast with Duse, the suffering mature woman. Between them stands Bernhardt, the creature of passion and power, larger than life and dangerously unpredictable.’¹² D.H. Lawrence perhaps best captures Bernhardt’s complex appeal:

⁸The role of women in wider society was also a key question in Victorian Britain towards the end of the nineteenth century, as Goldhill summarises: ‘It could plausibly be claimed that three areas of debate have claims to be the dominant, or at least obsessive concerns of the complex, public, cultural discourse of Victorian Britain in the 1880s: first, the “woman question” – the discussion around gender roles, desire and sexuality; second, religion – the clash between forms of Christianity, and between Christianity and other forms of spirituality as well as materialism; third, the role of the past and in particular the ancient past of Greece and Rome’ (Goldhill (2011), 43).

⁹Foley (2012), 6.

¹⁰Stokes et al. (1988), 46.

¹¹For Phaedra as a monster, see §6.4 below.

¹²Stokes et al. (1988), 10.

Sarah Bernhardt was wonderful and terrible. She opened up the covered tragedy that works the grimaces of this wonderful dime show. Oh, to see her, and to hear her, a wild creature, a gazelle with a beautiful panther's fascination and fury, sobbing and sighing like a deer sobs, wounded to death, and all the time with the sheen of silk, the glitter of diamonds, the moving of men's handsomely groomed figures about her! . . . She represents the primeval passions of woman, and she is fascinating to an extraordinary degree.¹³

Here we see the duality that represents women on the stage, both as executors of their own action but also as objects of another (primarily male) gaze.

Actresses were often inspired by other art forms, the most notable being the sculptural ideal hinted at in some of the quotations above, and discussed in detail by Gail Marshall in her book *Actresses on the Victorian Stage*.¹⁴ By the early twentieth century, however, focus turned away from sculpture to vase painting.¹⁵ Marshall opens with the image of Hermione in Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale*, and the analysis of Hermione amongst other of Shakespeare's female characters in 1832 by Mrs Jameson entitled *Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical, and Historical*:

Jameson reveals the attractiveness of the statue-state for women, the exaltation generated by that form, and the benefits of reverence and respect that may accrue to it. She is also, however, aware of the uneasiness of the art-life relationship actually 'embodied' in the statue, and of the hampering implications for women of a too-ready identification with marble form. In particular, Jameson highlights the way in which speech, the access to, and necessity for, language, is denied in the identification between woman and the idealised marble, thus denying also the possibility of articulating independent subjectivity.¹⁶

¹³As quoted in Stokes et al. (1988), 55. This kind of language was used of a recent performance of Benjamin Britten's *Phaedra* cantata with Angelika Kirschlager singing the title role; the overall performance was called 'startling' and Kirschlager was described in the Guardian review as 'reaching near mania in *Phaedra*'s catastrophic declaration of love for Hippolytus' and also having a 'wild way with *Phaedra*' (Ashley (2012)).

¹⁴Stokes discusses how overlap between artistic media was common in the nineteenth century, albeit with some restrictions: 'In the nineteenth century the arts shared and exchanged with one another, and much that was exciting in the culture involved implicit combinations and comparisons between media. Interdisciplinary practice should not, however, be mistaken for homogeneity of intention. There were common codes at work, unquestionably, but they had to be flexible to a considerable degree. As [Martin] Meisel puts it [in his book *Realizations*], nineteenth century narrative in general involved "not a fixed set of signs or a closed system of iconic representation, but an expanding universe of discourse, rule-governed but open, using a recognizable vocabulary of gesture, expression, configuration, object and ambiance." It was because they partook of that openness that the great actresses thrived' (Stokes et al. (1988), 7).

¹⁵These developments could also be seen in modern dance, on which see e.g. Foley (2012), 80-91.

¹⁶Marshall (1998), 3-4.

This passage has important implications for the terminology of ‘envoicing’ in opera and modern dance which I discuss below. Jameson identifies the complexity around ‘embodying’ on the Victorian stage – as we shall see below, ‘envoicing’ becomes a way for women to truly take centre stage, not just as an object for the gaze of men, but achieving emancipation through voice and movement.¹⁷

Marshall develops what she calls the ‘Galatea-aesthetic’ (referencing Ovid’s telling of the Pygmalion myth) to capture the sculptural ideal portrayed by actresses on the Victorian stage, taking Jameson one step further by arguing, as follows:

...on the Victorian stage at least, it was precisely the ‘statuesque’ actress who was a highly charged icon of sexual desirability, whose own ‘erotic energy’ was variously camouflaged, denied, even facilitated by her access to the theatrical rhetoric of statuary. However, if the actress was to achieve recognition for other forms of energy, for instance, creative, interpretive, transformative, or professional, then that rhetoric had to be abandoned.¹⁸

Bernhardt’s predecessor Rachel embodied these very qualities, often compared to a marble statue.¹⁹ It was also argued that the role of Phèdre in particular lent itself to such ‘statuesque grace’.²⁰ Marshall does argue, however, that Rachel’s statuesque manner was very much her own artistic choice, calling into question Jameson’s claims that women on the stage could only be statues at the behest of men: ‘This actress’ adoption of the form of a statue on stage is not then an instinctive, “natural” resource, the apotheosis of her femininity, as Jameson would have us believe, but may be a deliberate artistic and intellectual choice.’²¹

¹⁷Marshall cites another speech metaphor, again on *The Winter’s Tale*, by Valerie Traub, who states that this and other Shakespeare plays ‘give women speech only to silence them [...] make women move only to still them’ (as quoted in Marshall (1998), 4). We shall see below how by singing and dancing her passion, Phaedra is given a true voice in the adaptations under discussion in this chapter.

¹⁸Marshall (1998), 4.

¹⁹E.g. ‘When in repose she was like a marble statue; but the marble was full of life, breath, and passion’ (Marshall (1998), 48).

²⁰Marshall (1998), 49.

²¹Marshall (1998), 49. For another example of an actress who embodied the sculptural ideal, see Macintosh (2013b), 524 on Helen Faucit: ‘This was in marked contrast to the English star, Helen Faucit, another “statue”, at whom [the critic] de Quincey marvelled in an ecstatic review of her performance as Antigone in the 1845 production of Sophocles’ eponymous tragedy, with choral settings by Felix Mendelssohn: “the most faultless of Grecian marbles . . . What perfection of Athenian sculpture, the noble figure, the lovely arms of the fluent drapery! What an unveiling of the ideal statuesque.” But Helen Faucit was now a living statue and that was her appeal.’

Interestingly, Sarah Bernhardt was seen as an 'actress who defied the Pygmalion-attentions of critics and audiences, choosing rather to be seen as explicitly controlling her own stage appearances through her self-conscious artistry.'²² Bernhardt refused to be the kind of sculpture robbed of voice or movement of her own volition, as Marshall continues, 'for Bernhardt, the stage could be a venue for the kind of self-sculpting activity which was largely denied to her American and English contemporaries.'²³ Bernhardt was able to take control of her art, both herself as a successful sculptor, and as the manager of many of her productions. This removed her from the Galatea-Pygmalion dynamic, as Marshall states: 'Rather than confirming her as a Galatea, the dynamics of Bernhardt's performance meant that the "pleated white garment which clung mysteriously to [her] figure" in this part, rendered her rather a Delilah or a siren.'²⁴ In this way, Bernhardt paved the way for the 'New Women' of the late nineteenth century who, inspired by the plays of Ibsen, began actively to resist the sculptural ideal.²⁵

Stokes, Booth and Bassnett speak of the actresses Bernhardt, Terry and Duse not just in sculptural terms, but also in terms resonant of ballet: 'All three may have had celebrated love affairs, all three may have had a tendency towards behaviour typical of the *prima donna*, but all three were remarkably self-controlled when it came to their art.'²⁶ Bernhardt was seen as particularly emblematic of this prima ballerina behaviour, as Stokes continues: [Bernhardt] 'aroused enormous animosity precisely through her outrageous brand of feminist behaviour – in a male-dominated society she exploited her privileged position as a *prima donna* to the maximum effect.'²⁷ Despite their celebrity status, these actresses were part of a wider Victorian culture that objectified women on stage, even those with such commanding presences as these three women. Stokes

²²Marshall (1998), 115. It should be noted, however, that the language of sculpture was still used to describe Bernhardt's performances, c.f. Macintosh (2013b), 517, where she quotes the French theatre critic Francisque Sarcey on a performance of *Phèdre* in 1893: 'an artistic beauty that made one quiver with admiration, the look of a fine statue.'

²³Marshall (1998), 116.

²⁴Marshall (1998), 116. Comparing Bernhardt to a siren prefigures the power of the female voice we will explore later in this section and in discussing operatic adaptations in §5.1.1, §5.3, and §5.4 below.

²⁵For more on the Ibsenite New Woman, see e.g. Marshall (1998), 142-8 and 166-70 and Macintosh (2013b), 524-5.

²⁶Stokes et al. (1988), 1.

²⁷Stokes et al. (1988), 2.

continues:

As object of the gaze of the spectator, woman on stage or in a frame could be possessed vicariously, could be held in the mind's eye and enjoyed, and could even be pasted into an album or hung on a wall for the continuing delectation of her admirer/owner.

The dramatic stage was still a very male-dominated space, both in terms of those who controlled the performances (directors, playwrights), but also those who viewed them. And as such, women who dominated the stage were still subject to objectification and vicarious, if not actual, possession by men. Stokes again emphasises this gender dynamic:

The actress held a marginalized position in the hierarchy of sexual relations; she was independent in terms of her professional activity, something that most other women could never aspire to; she could become rich, famous and powerful, but at the same time she could only achieve that success by allowing herself to be bought by her public.²⁸

This does call into question whether or not such high status actually led to empowerment in any real sense of the word for these actresses.

Ballet did not have the same prestigious status as the stage that featured such prolific actresses as those discussed above in the nineteenth century, as Macintosh points out in her work on the *corps de ballet*:

During the course of the nineteenth century, ballet became increasingly associated with lowbrow culture, and the roles of dancer and prostitute hard to disentangle. Ballet as an art form was sullied as a consequence, especially for those who sought to dissociate it from the alleged purity of Graeco-Roman antiquity. As Marian Smith has demonstrated, there are considerable links between opera and dance in Paris at this time, but prejudices on the part of musicologists towards dance have meant that, until very recently, these interconnections have been overlooked.²⁹

Macintosh is speaking in the context of the Greek chorus, but her observations highlight two important points in this section; firstly, the relatively modest status of dance at the time that Phaedra was dominating the stage (which we shall see changed dramatically

²⁸Stokes et al. (1988), 3.

²⁹Macintosh (2013a), 310.

in the twentieth century),³⁰ and secondly, the important resonances between dance and opera (which will underpin much of my upcoming analysis).³¹

It did take some time before dance was seen as compatible with such high-brow entertainment as tragedy.³² It is, however, recognised from an early stage that dance, like acting in the Victorian era, and ballet in particular, was dominated by women:

At a time when the operatic chorus at the Paris Opéra was overwhelmingly male, ballet became an increasingly female preserve once the *danse noble* style with its aristocratic associations disappeared in the aftermath of the Revolution and even male roles were increasingly played *en travestie*. But, if ballet came to represent a new matriarchy, it did so only in terms of what was presented on stage.³³

Macintosh here is speaking of the time following the 1830 Revolution, when the Paris Opéra was a distinctly patriarchal institution. Even though women dominated the balletic stage, then, they were limited by the roles they were cast in by the men in charge (in contrast to the actresses discussed above, who generally had at least some control over the roles they took on, if not the theatres themselves, in the case of Bernhardt for example). Macintosh concludes that 'the ballet chorus or *corps de ballet* provided one of the few public explorations of female subjectivity and power.'³⁴

This would all change in the early twentieth century with the evolution of the modern dance genre, when dancers took over from stage actresses in providing a vehicle for tragic expression. Isadora Duncan was an early example, although she struggled

³⁰Although it is important to note that, despite such respectable leading ladies as those discussed above, many actresses were not exempt from comparison with prostitutes in the Victorian era.

³¹Dance also helped bring an end to the sculptural ideal, c.f. Macintosh (2013b), 532, comparing Nijinsky to Isadora Duncan: 'Nijinsky himself, clad only in a leotard and sandals, similarly broke absolutely with the sculptural ideal, as he too danced in profile and shocked Paris high society with a simulated orgasm in the final few moments of the ballet.'

³²See Macintosh (2013a), 312: 'Dance, then, was charged with such low status and moral ambiguity by the mid-nineteenth century that it could be deemed altogether incompatible with tragedy.' Indeed great pains were taken to dissociate tragedy from dance, even in the ancient world. Macintosh cites the months of research undertaken by the theatre critic George Henry Lewes in 1845 for an article in *The Classical Museum* 'in order "to prove that there was no dancing whatever in the Greek tragic chorus"'. In his view, dancing is "so contrary to all notions of tragedy", and he maintains that the development from the dithyramb to drama and its consequent loss of the satyric entailed a loss of dance, which is preserved only in the satyr play' (Macintosh (2013a), 313).

³³Macintosh (2013a), 318-19.

³⁴Macintosh (2013a), 325. Compare this to Havelock Ellis' 1894 textbook *Man and Woman*, as quoted in Stokes et al. (1988), 7: 'There is at least one art in which women may be said not merely to rival but naturally to excel men: this is the art of acting ...'

with narrative: ‘Duncan’s pathbreaking experiments in the early twentieth century with expressing emotions through the unfettered, “natural” body, often using poses inspired by Greek vases, turned out to be best suited in her own case to solo dance; her attempts to produce works including narrative that more closely responded to Greek tragedy proved less successful.’³⁵ It was not until Martha Graham that dance as a vehicle for portraying Greek tragedy truly came to the fore: ‘Martha Graham’s ambitious Greek dances (1946-67), which responded directly to Greek tragedies, finally developed a new version of “tragic” dance theater, even though they almost never used words and transformed the shape of the action in the original plays through the use of flashback and extended focus on particular emotional and subjective moments.’³⁶

Foley goes on to argue about the connection between reception of Greek tragedy and the development of modern dance (in the United States, in particular):

The reception of Greek art, myth, and culture in the United States is profoundly intertwined with the development of modern dance in America during the first half of the twentieth century. Although ballet and pantomime had already and continued to respond to classical myths and Greek art, modern dance inaugurated a new relation between movement and music that allowed the choral and musical dimensions of Greek tragedy to be reimagined in performance.³⁷

For Graham, this exploration was also a particularly female one, as Foley continues: ‘Her turn to Greek tragedy also allowed her to explore female identity. Graham’s focus on the psychology of the tragic heroine, to say nothing of Freudian/Jungian archetypes in general, influenced later new versions of Greek tragedy by women.’³⁸ Graham also took a significant step away from the more reserved femininity portrayed by many

³⁵Foley (2012), 78. See also Hall and Macintosh, who point out in their volume on Greek tragedy in the British theatre how Isadora Duncan ‘drew inspiration from Greek sculptures and depictions on Greek vases’ and was also inspired by Mounet-Sully’s famous *Oedipus* (Hall and Macintosh (2005), 546). They emphasise how Duncan also represented a dramatic break from the restrictions of the past: ‘For the avant-garde theatre practitioners, however, [Duncan’s art form] provided a radical break with the tyranny and restrictions of the past. For Nijinsky, for example, the star of Les Ballets Russes, Duncan “dared to put liberty to movement; she has opened the door of the cell to the prisoners”’ (Hall and Macintosh (2005), 547). The dancer Maud Allan provided another important example of this transition period at the turn of the twentieth century (see especially Hall and Macintosh (2005), 549-553).

³⁶Foley (2012), 78-9.

³⁷Foley (2012), 78.

³⁸Foley (2012), 92.

of the actresses discussed above and her immediate predecessors, including Isadora Duncan:

...in attempting to represent the truths of the body and its emotions (a “complete physical awareness”), and above all the female body, Graham wished to project female empowerment and deploy modernist techniques, in contrast to Duncan and other female dancers who were categorised by Graham’s contemporaries as “feminine” and “natural.” By avoiding the imitative or flowing, curvilinear movement associated with European ballet, Graham’s more androgynous style proved generative for later experiments in tragic choreography.³⁹

In some ways Graham could be considered the Sarah Bernhardt of the modern dance world; like Bernhardt, she had control of her own company and had directorial decision-making about what roles she took on. Graham, as we shall see in §5.2 below, was also closely identified with the female leads she portrayed, and portrayed them in a style all her own.⁴⁰

The dialogue between literature and modern dance can also contribute some important insights to this discussion. Dance offered a chance to escape the limitations of language:

In this climate of anxiety about language, the figure of the dancer emerged as a provocative and suggestive emblem. Writers frequently looked within to an imagined sublime beyond language itself – Eliot’s ‘heart of light’, Virginia Woolf’s ‘moments of being’, or James Joyce’s ‘epiphanies’. Dance offered Western European audiences a visible embodiment of this inward expression of transcendence. The perfect equilibrium of dancer, represented by such famous moments as the profile poses of Nijinsky’s choreography for the Diaghilev production of *L’Après-midi d’un faune* (1912), represents the phenomenological experience most frequently invoked in literary expressions of a modernist ‘sublime’.⁴¹

Dance was also freed, as we saw in our discussion of Graham and Robinson Jeffers in §4.2 in the previous chapter, from certain masculinising gender stereotypes that marked literature at the time, as Jones also points out:

³⁹Foley (2012), 92-3.

⁴⁰Sarah Bernhardt was well known in America as well as Europe; she performed Racine’s *Phèdre* at the Berkeley Greek Theatre twice in 1906 and 1911 to an enthusiastic response and then took the show across America to various outdoor theatres (Foley (2012), 38). On Bernhardt’s role as a manager as well as an actress, in control of her own business affairs, see Stokes et al. (1988).

⁴¹Jones (2013), 3.

Anxieties associated with gender also come into play. A masculinist strain (both misogynistic and homophobic) contributed to some of the most radical modernist movements of the 1910s and 1920s, which rejected everything from Baudelairean irony to Mallarméan symbolism, from Fokin's poetic abstraction to Nijinsky's two-dimensional choreographic designs, dismissing all these forms as examples of feminized post-romanticism and associating them with an economy of desire predicated on the idealization of the (predominantly) female or feminized male body.

Dance, as we have seen above, 'privileged a feminized, if not female, body.'⁴² Dance also allowed the artist to portray something beyond themselves, a distinct break from the self-sculpting of actresses such as Sarah Bernhardt. Jones quotes the Polish dancer and ballet director Marie Rambert on Nijinsky in an interview in 1974, 'On the stage, [Nijinsky] didn't at all resemble the person he was in life. He didn't bring *anything* what [*sic*] is called personality. Not at all. He created something – unrelated almost to himself, to his self'; Jones continued: 'The notion of disciplined detachment from individual personality suggests an annihilation of self in the act of creating some other performing identity.'⁴³

In her work on Martha Graham's *Night Journey*, Zajko also speaks of the important role women played in the development of modern dance:

... in its formative years modern dance was overwhelmingly, although not exclusively, the province of women. Julia Foulkes has discussed how although female modern dancers did not necessarily embrace specific goals about changing the status of women, they did have leading roles as choreographers, performers, teachers, and directors of companies and this placed them in the middle of ongoing debates about what women were capable of, the differences and similarities between men and women, and the role of women as creators of and commentators on American culture.⁴⁴

Women in modern dance were central not only to the performances themselves, but to making these performances happen, behind the scenes and in positions of power and control. Thus women were able to take a leadership role that was not yet available to them in other media. This did eventually filter into literature, where Graham became an inspiration for feminist writers 'who, since the 1990s, have worked hard to

⁴²Jones (2013), 8.

⁴³Jones (2013), 9-10.

⁴⁴Zajko (2010), 332.



Figure 5.2: Martha Graham and Bertram Ross in *Night Journey*; image taken from Stodelle (1984).

address the issues at stake in the construction of a Modernist canon that ... centred its attention on a few dominant white males.'⁴⁵ Here, again, we see the move from simply embodying, as in the sculptural ideal discussed above, to empowering, emancipating, and, as we shall see below, culminating in 'envoicing'.

Although it is understood that opera and dance are two different genres in their own right, I seek to look at the continuities between the two, especially the way in which female characters can dominate in these two genres. The musical register present in opera and dance gives it an added layer of complexity in performance, compared to dramatic productions. Where either there are no words or the words cannot be understood, the other aspects of live performance, particularly movement and sound, create an audience engagement with the female lead that may not be quite so potent in dramatic acting. This is not to say that female actresses cannot dominate stage adaptations – Sarah Bernhardt is such an example – however I argue that there is

⁴⁵Zajko (2010), 335.

something particular about opera and dance, with the particular sensory experience that these two genres give their audiences, that in a sense liberates the Phaedra character, and frees her from the constraints that usually place her and her struggles second to the male characters in dramatic adaptations, as we have seen in previous chapters.

Martha Graham again provides a helpful example of the way in which dance enabled women to express themselves, via tragedy, in a way that traditional theatre made less straightforward, which can in turn be applied to opera:

The inarticulate experience of feeling classical is translated by Graham into the ‘target language’ of dance, but dance itself is an intermediary discourse that allows for the expression of a greater degree of unconscious material than language-based art forms. This somewhat clumsy formulation aims to convey the idea of the special relationship dance was perceived to have in this period with the unconscious primal instincts and energies of human beings, an idea which underpinned the creative choices of dance practitioners
⁴⁶

Although it is hard to put into words, as Zajko herself acknowledges, movement lends itself to going deeper into the unconscious realm, and thus connecting with an audience on a deeper level. Opera is, in many ways, a language-based art form; however, as I will argue, it has much more in common with dance in the sense that its words are much harder to understand than those in a spoken drama, and therefore movement and music take a primary role in conveying the meaning behind the words.

It is not a given, of course, that opera and modern dance, whilst having prominent female characters, actually lend their female leads any greater agency than the Phaedra characters we have seen dominated by the male characters in dramatic versions. This is precisely the argument Catherine Clément makes in her book where she describes the more traditional prima donna role in opera as follows:

Opera is not forbidden to women. That is true. Women are its jewels, you say, the ornament indispensable for every festival. No prima donna, no opera. But the role of the jewel, a decorative object, is not the deciding role; and on the opera stage women perpetually sing their eternal undoing. The emotion is never more poignant than at the moment when the voice

⁴⁶Zajko (2010), 338.

is lifted to die. Look at these heroines. With their voices they flap their wings, their arms writhe, and then there they are, dead, on the ground.⁴⁷

To further her argument about opera as the 'undoing' of women, Clément goes on to argue that not many women have access to the controlling roles of opera, the directors, producers, conductors.⁴⁸ She also argues that the fact that the words these women sing cannot be understood removes any potential risk associated with prioritising a female character.⁴⁹

Clément then goes on to cast opera as a kind of anti-feminist genre: 'Opera concerns women. No, there is no feminist version; no, there is no liberation. Quite the contrary: they suffer, they cry, they die. Singing and wasting your breath can be the same thing.'⁵⁰ At the same time, she acknowledges that analysis of the libretto is important to her argument:

And so I am going to talk about women and their operatic stories. I am going to commit the sacrilege of listening to the words, reading the libretti, following the twisted, tangled plots. I am preparing not to follow in the great forebears' footsteps – I refuse to take such well-trodden paths; *initially* this is not to be about the music. What do I make of the music? It is everywhere of course, even in the words. The women sing and the melodies carry them away. However, I am determined to pay full attention to the language, the forgotten part of opera. The part that always keeps to the shadows, although the words are still sounds and make music.⁵¹

Despite opening the door to the way in which understanding the words can enhance the experience of opera, and perhaps even a woman's role in it, Clément closes it again by arguing not only that lack of understanding of the words is part of opera's mystique,⁵² but also that the librettist is ultimately unimportant when compared to the composers and directors who really make opera:

⁴⁷Clément (1997), 5. Note the inclusion of movement imagery; this writhing and flapping could equally apply to the death of a ballet prima donna.

⁴⁸Clément (1997), 5.

⁴⁹Clément (1997), 9.

⁵⁰Clément (1997), 11.

⁵¹Clément (1997), 12.

⁵²'But why deprive those who take pleasure in this mysterious language of their happiness. Why ruin something made not to be understood, made to speak to that part of childhood that hears the mother, feels her close by, without yet knowing the meaning of those caressing words?' (Clément (1997), 15).

Opera: it is a scene where words cannot be said except in sounds structured by music. It is a double scene where two languages, the spoken and the musical, employed by two authors, the librettist and the musician, play inseparably. ... Everybody ought to know this combination; yet in reality, what happens? *Don Giovanni* is Mozart's opera; *Otello* Verdi's opera, and the librettist, throughout opera's long history, is buried in the rubble of a text that was necessary but duly abandoned. ... Opera music makes its empire and steals the glory, dispossesses half the authors, permanently strips them of their work – without which opera's song would have no place.⁵³

Clément concludes her introductory argument by equating the forgetting of the words to the forgetting of women in opera: 'Reading the texts, more than in listening at the mercy of an adored voice, I found to my fear and horror, words that killed, words that told every time of a women's undoing.'⁵⁴

This is not the only way to look at such issues, however, and Carolyn Abbate's article provides a powerful contrary view to Clément's analysis:

...opera, far from being a revenge-tragedy that Catherine Clément calls 'the undoing of women,' is a genre that so displaces the authorial musical voice onto female characters and female singers that it largely reverses a conventional opposition of male (speaking) subject and female (observed) object.⁵⁵

Abbate argues that opera eliminates the specifically male position of Author, supplanting it with an overtly female and musical force (the Voice). Abbate also talks specifically about the performance element of opera, adding a layer of complexity to the concept of Author: 'Does not some part of all authorial rage at performers spring from resentment at a second voice who completes the work in her (or his) own interpretation?'⁵⁶ Abbate continues:

... the phenomenological peculiarities of music's production urge us to imagine originating singers, voices not simply that of a single historical composer, hence potentially indeterminate or variable in gender.⁵⁷

⁵³Clément (1997), 18.

⁵⁴Clément (1997), 22.

⁵⁵Abbate (1993), 228-9.

⁵⁶Abbate (1993), 235.

⁵⁷Abbate (1993), 235.

And the importance of the performer and author is perhaps even more exaggerated in dance, where the work in many senses does not exist except as it is created by its dancers for the audience (there is no musical score or libretto, and no recorded version that can be experienced just aurally, although it should be noted that dance notation does exist as a way of documenting dance performances for posterity⁵⁸), and there is often overlap between choreographer and dancer (Graham is a notable example).

5.1.1 Prelude: Ildebrando Pizzetti’s *Fedra*

Ildebrando Pizzetti was keen on composing opera from the very beginning of his musical training. After several abandoned attempts, he composed *Fedra* over three years from 1909-1912 on a libretto written by Gabriele D’Annunzio.⁵⁹

Fedra was not only Pizzetti’s first, but also his most successful opera, premiering at La Scala in Milan in 1915. Despite a lukewarm reception at the première, *Fedra* has consistently been one of Pizzetti’s most-performed works, both inside and outside of Italy. Grout describes Pizzetti’s operas as follows:

They have a continuous full-bodied orchestral texture in a mosaic of recurring motifs, are primarily lyrical in expression with flexible speech-like vocal melodies, and are characterised by extensive dramatic use of choruses in a sensitive polyphonic style inspired by classical Italian models.⁶⁰

Pizzetti’s operas generally seek to emphasise the words that are spoken rather than cloak them with oppressive musical motifs. *Fedra* is no exception to this general rule.

⁵⁸See Thoms (2013), especially Chapter 1.

⁵⁹*Fedra* was not Pizzetti’s only foray into the world of classical drama, although it was quite some time before he would return to Greek tragedy for inspiration. He won an Italian prize for his radio opera *Ifigenia* (1950) and his final work was the opera *Clitennestra* (1965) which also premiered at La Scala and was described by a critic with the usual lukewarm praise that Pizzetti’s later works were wont to receive: ‘Musically, the work was ... somber, repetitive, unnecessarily difficult to sing. But as exciting theatre, the blood-thirsty Agammemnon legend is hard to beat ...’ (Zinar (1971), 88). D’Annunzio was a contemporary of Sarah Bernhardt and, though he usually worked with her Italian contemporary Eleanora Duse, he did work with Bernhardt when she performed as Anna, the blind soothsayer (a role also portrayed by Duse in her career) in his *La città morta*. D’Annunzio was so taken by Bernhardt’s performance that he inscribed her copy of his libretto for the play, ‘To Sarah Bernhardt who once displayed in her living eyes the blindness of a sacred statue’ (as quoted in Stokes et al. (1988), 8). This not only has implications for the statuesque ideal discussed above, but also leads one to wonder whether Bernhardt’s famous portrayal of Racine’s *Phèdre* had any impact on D’Annunzio’s libretto for Pizzetti’s *Fedra*.

⁶⁰Grout and Williams (2003), 540.

However, although *Fedra* is a characteristic Pizzetti opera (in that the libretto is usually the focus, and the words are normally clearly annunciated and easy to understand), his Phaedra is the one who is most often given the chance to sing in the lyrical tradition more reminiscent of Wagner and Strauss; hers is clearly an operatic performance, not a mere delivery of the text. The orchestra interacts with her more than any other character (she is most often accompanied by strings, and her aria, *Procle, perché tu tocchi il dio esanime*, sung when Hippolytus' dismembered corpse is brought on stage at the start of Act III, begins with her words alternating with a solo violin).

Phaedra's uncontrollable passion for Hippolytus dominates the opera. The opening notes in the vocal score emphasise the central importance of the Phaedra character to the opera as a whole:

*FEDRA ... Né l'anima tua stride
penata in ogni stilla del tuo sangue;
né il vento, che rinfresca l'erba, strazia
il tuo corpo deserto; né la notte
affannata s'affama del tuo soffio;
né ti vincola il giorno alla sua ruota
crucele; né tu odi, né tu odi,
irta d'orrore, né tuo odi dentro
di te mugghiare il mostro
fraterno
..... Ma Fedra,
Fedra indimenticabile⁶¹*

Pizzetti's Phaedra is both a performer (the Diva figure who sings soaring lyrical lines in which the words are unimportant) and focussed on acting her part (becoming 'Phaedra', ensuring that her words are intelligible). And so we have in this early example an interesting bridge between the theatrical Phaedras who speak their lines in the shadow of their male counterparts, and the operatic female lead, who has the opportunity to communicate her desires in this more expressive medium. And this Phaedra does triumph in the end; the opera finishes with Fedra singing this final aria:

*O dea,
tu non hai più potenza.*

⁶¹Pizzetti (1913). There are interesting resonances here with the set designs and movements described in Martha Graham's *Phaedra*, on which see §5.2 below.

*Spenti sono i tuoi fuochi. Un fuocho bianco
io porto all'Ade. Ippolito
io l'ho velato perché l'amo. È mio
là dove tu non regni. Io vinco.*

...

*Mirami. Vedo porre la saetta
sul teso arco lucente.*

*Nel mio cuore non è palpito. E giungere col dardo
non puoi l'altra mia vita. Ancóra vinco!
Ippolito, Ippolito, son teco.*

...

*Vi sorride,
o stelle, su l'entrare della Notte,
Fedra indimenticabile.*

Phaedra screams her *Io vinco* at the top of her register, sings her *Ancóra vinco!* with long, soaring notes, and comes down to the lowest part of her range to announce every syllable of *Fedra indimenticabile*. She dies on her own terms, having achieved all that she wanted to achieve, and never to be forgotten.⁶²

5.2 Martha Graham's *Phaedra*

Martha Graham was 67 when she choreographed her *Phaedra* and still unwilling to relinquish her role as the star dancer in her company. As Stodelle put it in her biography of Graham:

Her solos and her solo roles were her most intimate possessions. Each one was a 'deep song'; each one was a 'graph of the heart.' One did not cut one's heart into remnants.⁶³

At this late stage in her career, Graham sought to compose works that allowed her to use her age rather than be hindered by it, and *Phaedra* employed this strategy with huge success. Although it was not the last role she performed, it was the last role in which she was physically able to dance in the full sense of the word; in subsequent productions she played a much more static role. She thus retained her status as the

⁶²Sylvano Bussotti picked up the Italian tradition with his opera in three acts, inspired by Racine, *Phèdre* of 1988. Bussotti's two Phaedra operas are analysed in Fearn (1997), 161-169. This is part of a wider chapter on Italian opera of the period 1980-1990.

⁶³Stodelle (1984), 226.

lead dancer in this ballet, but the way in which she did this was very different to her previous roles as a younger woman, and also to the subsequent roles she played.⁶⁴ In *Phaedra*, Graham was integrally involved in all aspects of the composition of the ballet; choreography was her chief domain, but she also took a strong interest in the musical accompaniment for the work, composed by Robert Starer, who scored four of Graham's ballets.⁶⁵ Starer remembered the important role his meetings with Graham had on his composition:

Phaedra was a high point in my work. Martha showed me new things about my music ... more than anybody else. In *Phaedra* we had this close proximity. We worked after each session was finished. I brought it to her and we talked, and then I went on and described what I wanted⁶⁶

Starer was not the only collaborator who felt Graham's influence on the creation of *Phaedra*. Graham also dictated changes for her set designer Isamu Noguchi, who had done countless other designs for Graham ballets.

Stodelle describes the unveiling of one of the most controversial props in the show, Aphrodite's shrine:

When the sculptor first brought in the shell-like form, everybody gasped. He had intended it for Artemis' shrine, but its interior was lined with foam rubber and painted a 'shrieking red,' a far too realistic reproduction of female reproductive organs! Shocked, the shy Paul Taylor, who played Theseus, shook his head and murmured, 'Noguchi was *very* naughty.' It was the sculptor's idea that Hippolytus, portrayed by Bertram Ross, would open the form (the shell's sides closed like little doors) and take the chaste Artemis out, as if lifting her from a womb. Without a word, Martha sent the prop right back, and in time Noguchi converted Artemis' shrine to Aphrodite's heart-shaped abode by removing the padded interior and providing supports for aerial manoeuvres.⁶⁷

The set for *Phaedra* was sparse but each piece had huge significance. Artemis ended up standing on a small, simple round pedestal, her tall, straight posture emphasising

⁶⁴She danced five more roles before her retirement in 1969 (Judith, Hecuba, the Witch of Endor, Héloïse, and The Lady of the House of Sleep), which Stodelle describes as 'wholly pantomimic renderings' (Stodelle (1984), 228).

⁶⁵Stodelle (1984), 228.

⁶⁶Quoted in Stodelle (1984), 229.

⁶⁷Stodelle (1984), 232.

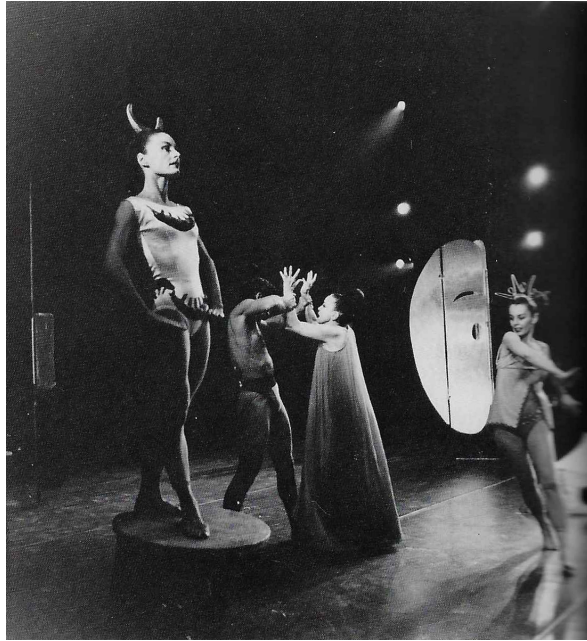


Figure 5.3: Martha Graham, Bertram Ross, Helen McGhee and Ethel Winter in *Phaedra*; image taken from Stodelle (1984).

her chastity, control, and status as religious icon. Aphrodite ended up in the converted womb, a heart-shaped shell that is still suggestive, if more subtly than in its original design, of the vulva. The suspension of the shell in the air allows the goddess, first danced by Ethel Winter, to move in ways that emphasise her eroticism and power, including the final gesture at the end of the ballet where she lifts her legs into a perfect, and highly sexual, side split.⁶⁸ Hippolytus first appears from within a tall column (a perfect counterpart to Aphrodite's shell in its suggestion of the male sexual organ), which Aphrodite opens in stages, gradually revealing to Phaedra parts of Hippolytus' body, beginning with the torso.⁶⁹ Lastly on stage is Phaedra's bed, so angular and oddly shaped that it was nearly impossible to lie on without falling off, thus evoking the perilous and painful nature of Phaedra's passion. The colours of the various parts of the set were also significant: Artemis' white platform for purity, Phaedra's gold bed for royalty, Hippolytus' blue column for masculinity, and the inside of Aphrodite's shell, white with splashes of pink, to highlight its association with the female anatomy.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Todd (1962), 12.

⁶⁹Stodelle (1984), 232.

⁷⁰The colours of the sets were very helpfully described by Todd (1962), since all surviving photos of the original production of the ballet are in black and white.

Graham had a history of prioritising the female role in her adaptations of Greek tragedy, as Foley summarises:

...Graham challenged the Greek originals by imagining events through the consciousness of the major female characters and by reconfiguring or eliminating elements of the original narrative through the use of flashback and a focus on moments of high emotional intensity.⁷¹

Graham had already utilised this technique in *Night Journey*, her adaptation of *Oedipus Rex* told through the eyes of Jocasta. Foley goes on to describe Graham's Phaedra-centric version of the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition as follows:

The later *Phaedra*, in contrast to Graham's sources, responded to Euripides' *Hippolytus* by juxtaposing an enactment of the hero's version of the story, in which Hippolytus rejected Phaedra's love, with an enactment of the queen's fiction about her rape by Hippolytus before her enraged husband Theseus, which permitted her to experience the erotic gratification with her stepson forbidden to her in life. The dance's humans became playthings of the divine duo Aphrodite and Artemis, who simultaneously embodied the characters' own desires. Phaedra's tragic lust derived from her mother, Pasiphae, who consorted with a bull and bore the Minotaur; the mother's veil, which falls on her daughter, becomes in Graham's version her suicidal shroud. Hippolytus initially stands behind a column of shutters; in the opening scene Aphrodite periodically reveals parts of his mesmerizing body. *Phaedra* revived the older woman - younger man theme of *Night Journey*, a theme central to Graham's own life as well.⁷²

Graham called this ballet a 'phantasmagoria of desire', and this is exactly what it is. Graham focusses on the illicit desire between Phaedra and her stepson, bringing it to the centre of attention in several highly erotic scenes. The first is the appearance of Phaedra's mother, Pasiphae, in a dream sequence. The Queen is carried on stage by four men to dance her own illicit passion for the bull; as she leaves she drops her

⁷¹Foley (2012), 95.

⁷²Calling Graham's *Phaedra* simply a response to Euripides is reductive for a variety of reasons, not just the theoretical questioning of a single source that I explored in §1.3. As we saw in the previous chapter, Graham was known to find inspiration in contemporary theatre, as well as ancient source material. Kenneth Rexroth's 1951 trilogy, *Beyond the Mountains*, which included *Phaedra* as Play One, may also have provided some inspiration for this highly eroticised adaptation. Foley describes the production as follows: 'Play One, *Phaedra*, staged, contrary to Greek and Roman versions, the ultimate sexual capitulation of Phaedra and her usually resistant stepson Hippolytus to each other. Theseus returned, and Hippolytus confessed his "rape" of Phaedra to his father. The practical soldier Theseus had in fact anticipated and even approved this possible romance before his return. Yet the horrified Phaedra and Hippolytus killed themselves' (Foley (2012), 133).

black mantle onto her daughter's writhing body, the very black cloth that will become Phaedra's shroud after she kills herself.⁷³ Pasiphae's appearance in the ballet could almost be a dance interpretation of the closing lines (113-128) of Phaedra's opening monologue in Seneca's *Phaedra*, ending with the haunting words: *nulla Minois levi / defuncta amore est, iungitur semper nefas*.

Graham's performance as Phaedra was described in one 1962 review of the ballet as one which 'radiates sexual frustration and fury in the central role.'⁷⁴ Graham also has Phaedra actually act out Hippolytus' rape of her in front of Theseus. The scene is described by Stodelle as follows:

A tour de force of histrionics that sets the spectator's nerves on edge, the lie serves a double purpose: as it stirs up uncontrollable fury in Theseus, it permits Phaedra to live out – as in a wishful dream – the sexual gratification she so desires.

Phaedra is the ballet of a woman overcome with desire, having lost all restraint, and dances such as this one of the rape fantasy, and her dance of fury at Hippolytus' rejection of her, emphasise the tragedy of Phaedra's fate.⁷⁵

The eroticism of the *Phaedra* ballet caused huge controversy when it first came out, and has been debated by critics since its very first review. Arthur Todd's review in *Dance and Dancers*, which I have relied on for much of the set descriptions, finds eroticism tempered by the fact that the passion is inspired by Aphrodite, and thus Phaedra cannot be held responsible for it. He writes:

Graham has given herself a role that would be erotic in the extreme were it not for the fact that her actions are impelled by Aphrodite's supernatural curse. Even at that, some of her choreography is so frankly sensual that it makes Petit's *Carmen* seem tame by comparison. Had any of these dances

⁷³Stodelle (1984), 230-231.

⁷⁴Todd (1962), 11.

⁷⁵This consummation of female desire was also present in Graham's *Night Journey*, as described in Zajko (2010), 344: 'One male student coached briefly by Graham is said to have commented uncomfortably that the Martha Graham Dance Company was the one dance company in America where the men suffered from vagina envy, and it is clear that Graham's version of the Oedipus myth is one where the pleasurable and mutual eroticism of the relationship between Oedipus and Jocasta is central and, indeed, where the sexual appetite of the queen is graphically represented both by Graham herself and by the mimetic gestures of the female chorus.'

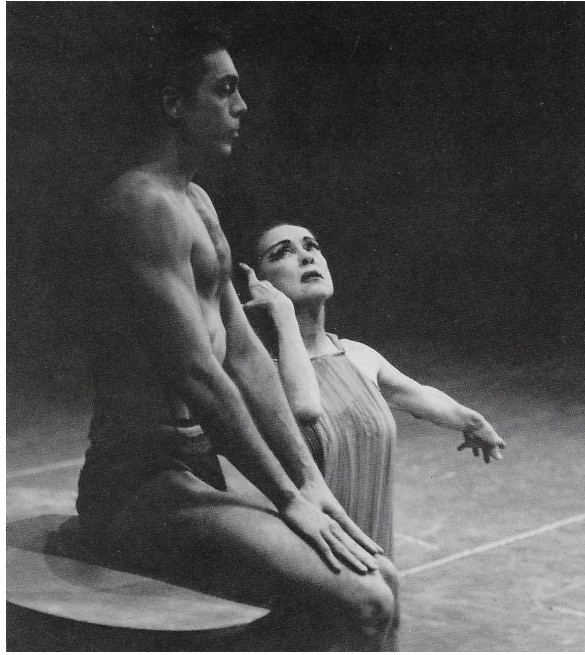


Figure 5.4: Martha Graham and Paul Taylor in *Phaedra*; image taken from Stodelle (1984).

been verbalised, the censor might well have stepped in. however, depraved and degrading as this myth is, its performance is magnificent.⁷⁶

Thus, for Todd the erotic nature of the ballet is integral to the power of its performance.⁷⁷ However, not all critics agree. A review of a revival in 1988 criticised the ballet for ‘debas[ing] the passions to the level of pornography, the kind of porn – baroque in its lewdness, while deadly earnest – that makes you giggle.’⁷⁸

Unfortunately the United States government in the 1960s found nothing funny about the erotic content of Graham’s ballet. The Brooklyn congresswoman Edna Kelly, who walked out of a performance of the *Phaedra* when it was on tour in Cologne, Germany, because she was so shocked by what she called a ‘dreadful spectacle’, called for censorship of the performance, preventing it from being exported because it reflected poorly on the United States. Other congressmen agreed. One representative from

⁷⁶Todd (1962), 12.

⁷⁷A similar view was expressed in Barnes (1969), a review of *Phaedra* shortly after Graham’s retirement, with Matt Turney dancing the lead: ‘Miss Graham – I think it must be the oriental in her – has a great sensitivity toward what might be termed as art’s erogenous zones. And interestingly she finds no need to employ nudity, suggestiveness or any forms of simulation on the wilder forms of love. With the taste, discernment, and best of all, precision, of a poet she just sings it as it is. “Phaedra” is very sexy – and it if it doesn’t sound too boring, totally tasteful.’

⁷⁸Tobias (1988), 109.

New Jersey crudely described the ballet as 'a lot of young men in loin clothes leaping around,'⁷⁹ curiously omitting any of the more obviously sexual scenes danced by the title character. The art world rallied to support Graham,⁸⁰ and the popularity of the ballet, which was not censored, though it was discussed at a panel before the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee, was if anything enhanced by the controversy. Graham's *Phaedra* did not simply dominate the stage; she also dominated public debate with her controversial passion for her stepson.

5.3 George Roumanis' *Ode to Phaedra*

George Roumanis' *Ode to Phaedra*, written between 1973 and 1978, but not performed until it was filmed for television in 1995, represents not only his first and only opera, but also his only piece inspired by the Classical world. Roumanis is a self-trained film and television composer living in Hollywood, California. Born in Trenton, New Jersey, he began his musical career at the age of twelve as a jazz bassist. By eighteen he was playing alongside such jazz greats as Tommy Dorsey and Dizzie Gillespie, and when he was only nineteen years old he started arranging works for these musicians, as well as other legends such as Benny Goodman, Count Basie and Les Brown. His long and varied career has involved everything from recording his own solo jazz albums to composing television commercials. When he was thirty-six years old, he moved to Hollywood and started working full time for the film and television industry, during which time he composed music for the original TV series *Mission Impossible* and *Star*

⁷⁹The Associated Press September 1963 article in the Herald Tribune, entitled ' "Erotic" Dance Congress Issue: Brooklyn's Edna Kelly Dislikes Martha Graham's "Phaedra".'

⁸⁰Hughes (1963) reported: "'Phaedra' is frank, all right, but it is honest and just about the worst advertising for licentiousness one could imagine. It says, in short, that the wages of the kind of sexual sickness it depicts are death. So much for the sensationalism of 'Phaedra'." And the *New York Times* article on 10 September 1963 reported that Hy Faine, executive secretary of the American Guild of Musical Artists, defended Graham, saying that "There is no greater creator the United States has produced than Martha Graham in this field. This is generally accepted," and citing the criticism that Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* received when it was first performed as an important parallel. Walter Terry's *Herald Tribune* article on 11 September 1963 cited Graham's huge success on her tour of *Phaedra* in the United Kingdom as evidence for her value as an American export: "Once in a generation a gifted individual is endowed with the ability to project to strangers some brilliant facet of a nation's art and thereby reveal something of its soul. This Miss Graham has done with such virtuosity that she has dispelled the prevalent notion that Americans live in a cultural wasteland with gadgets and frankfurters and atom bombs." '

Trek as well as the film score for *Of Mice and Men*, for which he achieved much critical acclaim. It was not until after his fortieth birthday, however, that Roumanis started formally studying music with his mentor George Tremblay, the man to whom Roumanis credits all of his musical achievements in the later part of his career. It was Tremblay who first encouraged Roumanis to write an opera, feeling that the musician was ideally suited to the genre, even though he had no experience composing in the medium.⁸¹ In order to gain familiarity with the world of opera, Roumanis began an intense study of the works of Wagner, from whom he garnered some of his most important operatic techniques.

Wagner was far from Roumanis' only inspiration in composing *Ode to Phaedra*. Raised by Greek immigrant parents, Roumanis grew up listening to stories from Classical mythology, and Phaedra's story was the first that came to mind when asked to compose an opera. As such, Roumanis was careful to include what he called 'a lot of Greek music', to give what he hoped his audience would experience as an 'ancient feel'.⁸² Roumanis had no desire to modernise the story, feeling that the power of the Euripidean original spoke for itself.⁸³ Much of the opera is composed in a Greek scale and in the typically Greek time signature of 7/4 or 7/8 (this rhythmic pattern comes through most strongly in Hippolytus' victory song, 'Olympia!', where Hippolytus and the chorus sing a hymn to all the gods in Olympus, clapping and dancing in their excitement over Hippolytus' athletic victory at the Olympic games). Roumanis also acknowledged that, due to his musical background, the tradition of American blues music could not help but come through in his composition.

⁸¹I was fortunate enough to speak with George Roumanis about his life in general and his opera *Ode to Phaedra* on 15 May 2007. A partial transcript is included in B.2. A recording of the complete conversation, along with a video recording of the opera (donated by Mr Roumanis) is now kept in the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD), Oxford University. George Roumanis' opera, *Ode to Phaedra*, can also be viewed online through his website: <<http://www.contemporaryclassicaljazz.com/>>.

⁸²See Savage (2010), especially 2-8, on claims made by early opera composers that they were picking up the tradition of singing tragedy from ancient Greek and Roman theatre.

⁸³Throughout our conversation, Roumanis maintained that Euripides was his main influence. He admitted to having read Seneca and Racine during his research, but insisted that the 'opera could not have existed without Euripides.' He also said that he was so disappointed by Jules Dassin's 1962 film version of the Phaedra legend, which is set in modern Greece, that he considered abandoning his own project. For Roumanis, the modernisation of the myth, which seems to involve Hippolytus giving into Phaedra's passion, simply did not work.

Although the libretto for the opera is credited to Frank Zajackowski, the story was conceived by Roumanis himself, who looked to Zajackowski, a professor of English literature at a local California community college, to help put his ideas into words. Although Roumanis composed his opera in the late 1970s, it would not reach a popular audience until it was picked up by Opera San Jose, filmed for the PBS (public television) affiliate, KTEH/San Jose, and broadcast nationwide on 26 August 1995. The executive producer of KTEH, Danny McGuire, explained how important it was for him to present such a new and innovative work:

It's good for audiences to change their diet now and then and see where the next stars of opera are coming from. That's why a lot of care went into the production of *Phaedra*: to demonstrate that quality 'opera-on-television' doesn't always have to be relegated to the traditionally rendered TV offerings of *Great Performances* or *Live from the Met*.⁸⁴

Roumanis' focus on Phaedra, who is played by the powerful young soprano Cynthia Clayton, is apparent from the very opening of the opera, where the following words move across the screen with the prelude playing in the background:

In Ancient Greece, where gods governed the emotions, deeds and aspirations of mortal men and women, the legend of Phaedra, the Queen of Athens, stood as an omen to mortals of the omnipotent powers of Aphrodite, the goddess of sexual love. Retold through the centuries by poets, musicians and dramatists, Phaedra's story – and that of her aging husband King Theseus and his youthful son Hippolytus – remains one of the most vivid tales of misguided passion and unrequited love.

This is Phaedra's story, first and foremost, but as this prologue suggests, Aphrodite will also play a huge role. The musical prelude that accompanies this text introduces one of the most important musical themes of the entire piece: that of the cithara, played by Aphrodite herself. Roumanis called this his Wagnerian leitmotif, and relied on its repetition, sometimes subtly woven into larger and more dramatic musical numbers, sometimes played solo as at this beginning, to represent Aphrodite and her control over Phaedra throughout the entire opera. The filmed version of the opera actually begins

⁸⁴'Ode to Phaedra: An operatic twist to an ageless morality tale, "Ode to Phaedra" combines the best of television and stage,' <<http://www.kteh.org/productions/docs/phaedrafact.html>>, first retrieved 13 March 2007.

with the goddess looking seductively at the camera, strumming out her motif on her instrument. The medium of opera-on-television also allows the repeated musical cues to Aphrodite's presence to be emphasised with visual cues as well. Aphrodite appears superimposed above the action on stage at crucial moments, such as when Oenone comes to Hippolytus to suggest he visit Phaedra, or several times during Hippolytus and Phaedra's scene together where Phaedra slowly seduces the prince (the most effective being when Phaedra begins to dance for Hippolytus, with Aphrodite glimmering in the background playing her cithara).

In Roumanis, Phaedra has power over both of the men in her life; at the beginning of the opera, Roumanis wrote a duet, 'My Phaedra, Queen of what I am,' for Phaedra and Theseus to sing before Theseus leaves for Delos, where he hopes to improve his fading health, in order to convey a tenderness between husband and wife. Still, Phaedra cannot shake her passion for Hippolytus, and gets Oenone to orchestrate a meeting with him. Phaedra expresses her love for Hippolytus through the aria, 'How fair can shine this moon,' a pure love song that clearly demonstrates Roumanis' American musical influences. Phaedra does succeed in seducing Hippolytus, who, in their duet, admits, 'I feel your love become my life,' but ultimately he resists her, singing, 'Yes, I feel this burning love. I am not stone, but I cannot deny my father.' Phaedra becomes desperate, practically screaming, 'Consume me Hippolytus!' but, though he finds it visibly painful, Hippolytus shouts, 'No, it cannot be,' and rushes off, leaving his sword behind.⁸⁵ The first act ends, as in Euripides, with Phaedra penning a suicide note and committing suicide, as in Racine and others, by drinking a potion. She dies singing a reprise of her earlier love song, but blames Aphrodite for her death: 'Forgotten now are all of my foolish plans, so betrayed by an arrogant Aphrodite. Here vengeance rules where once love freely danced. Alone I long for cool eternity.'

In the second act the conflict between father and son serves to further emphasise the power Phaedra holds over both men; she is a physical presence lying on her funeral bed looming in the background of the whole confrontation. Theseus sings a lament to his

⁸⁵An allusion to Seneca and Racine.

beloved wife before Hippolytus enters, deep in his victory revels and completely shocked and surprised to see the Queen dead. He is even more pained, and visibly shaken, to find that she has accused him of rape, using his abandoned sword as evidence. The aged, and clearly quite ill, Theseus challenges his son to a duel, saying, 'You are no more my son than the lifeless rocks.' Hippolytus refuses to fight, but Theseus lunges at him nonetheless; at that very moment Oenone arrives to clear Hippolytus' name but is accidentally stabbed by Theseus.⁸⁶ Before dying, Oenone has time to explain, 'Forgive her vengeance, she was driven by passion. Aphrodite ruled her heart. O Phaedra, forgive my Phaedra, she knew not ... what she did.' Roumanis explained that Oenone was his sacrificial lamb; he saw her death as a necessary step on the path to reconciliation between father and son.

The opera does not end here, however, because just as Theseus, overcome with his illness and emotion, promises his kingdom to his son, Aphrodite's ethereal face appears above Phaedra's funeral bier to blow her a kiss and resurrect her from the dead (Roumanis described the goddess as giving Phaedra 'one last shot of adrenalin'). When asked about his motivation for bringing Phaedra back, Roumanis said that he could not resist a trio between his three principal characters; the opera just was not complete without it. Yet he wanted to stay true to Euripides, so he had to have Phaedra kill herself and write the suicide note accusing Hippolytus of rape; resurrecting her, thus, became the only option. The trio is one of the most musically complex numbers in the entire opera, where the two men and Phaedra sing interlocking vocal lines about the power and cruelty of love. Ultimately, Theseus is so overwhelmed by the return of his beloved that his aged body cannot handle it and he dies in his son's arms. It is at this moment that Phaedra, who has been singing from her funeral bed, gets down and takes centre stage. She immediately looks for reconciliation with Hippolytus, their love being legitimised by Theseus' death. The chorus steps in at this point, however (Roumanis saw them as his Furies, although they are not violent), and separates the lovers. Hippolytus comes to his senses and sings about the horror of illegitimate love:

⁸⁶Cf. how Strophe gets caught in the cross fire at the end of Sarah Kane's adaptation.

‘Does love always bring such shame, such catastrophe? No, this cannot be the true voice of love.’⁸⁷ Phaedra is once again devastated by Hippolytus’ rejection and screams, ‘For I am Phaedra. Lost to love . . . A woman held in passion’s hand . . . held close until her passion dies!’ at which point she takes Hippolytus’ sword and stabs herself (captured by the camera in slow motion). She dies in Hippolytus’ arms, the leitmotif comes up again as Aphrodite comes into focus above the lovers’ heads, strumming her instrument, and the opera ends.

Roumanis very much wanted his opera to focus on the exploration of Phaedra’s passion, saying in an interview with KTEH, ‘I want audiences to hear the very heartbeat of this beautiful woman who’s at war with herself and her obsession.’⁸⁸ So while the presence of Aphrodite, throughout the opera, both through her musical leitmotif and her visual appearances above the action, emphasises that Phaedra’s desire is not her own, but is thrust upon her by a vengeful goddess, somehow Phaedra still seems to be the one in control. Though Phaedra claims that ‘Aphrodite swells [these arms] with insatiable desire,’ she actively seduces Hippolytus, enthralling him with an erotic dance that leads him to her bed. And although it is Aphrodite who wakes her from death, and Aphrodite she blames for her false accusation of rape, as soon as Theseus is dead, she looks for a now legitimate union with Hippolytus. The opera ends on Phaedra’s terms: this Phaedra, like Pizzetti’s, ensures that she will be remembered: ‘I am Phaedra . . . a woman held by passion’s hand . . . held close until her passion dies!’⁸⁹

⁸⁷It was very important to Roumanis that Hippolytus be spared in his version. He saw him as the innocent victim of the goddess’ designs, who ultimately stays true to Artemis (who, in contrast to Aphrodite, does not play a significant role in the opera and is only mentioned as part of the litany of gods and goddesses in ‘Olympia!’), and thus found it impossible to kill him.

⁸⁸“Ode to Phaedra: An operatic twist to an ageless morality tale, ‘Ode to Phaedra’ combines the best of television and stage,” <<http://www.kteh.org/productions/docs/phaedrafact.html>>, first retrieved 13 March 2007.

⁸⁹It is worth noting here the work of the prominent American composer, George Rochberg, who composed his monodrama for mezzosoprano and orchestra, *Phaedra* in 1976, contemporaneous with Roumanis, his work inspired by Robert Lowell’s translation of Racine. Lowell featured in Benjamin Britten’s *Phaedra*, which was also written in 1976, and choreographed, as I discuss in §5.4, by Richard Alston in November 2013 as part of the Barbican’s celebration of Britten’s centenary.

5.4 Benjamin Britten's *Phaedra*

Benjamin Britten's *Phaedra* was first performed by mezzo-soprano Janet Baker and the English Chamber Orchestra in June 1976, and in November 2013 was brought to the Barbican stage with choreography by Richard Alston as part of Britten's centenary celebrations. Britten's dramatic cantata sets to music four short episodes from Robert Lowell's verse translation of Racine's *Phèdre*. In the Prologue section Phaedra sings of how she first caught sight of Hippolytus at her wedding to Theseus, fell in love and struggled in vain to combat that love: 'Hippolytus! I saw his face, turned white! ... I faced my flaming executioner, Aphrodite, my mother's murderer! ... Alas, my hungry open mouth, thirsting with adoration, tasted drouth – Venus resigned her altar to my new lord.' In the second, Presto, section, Phaedra confronts Hippolytus to reveal her love and, when he rejects her, to ask him to kill her: 'You monster! You understood me too well! ... I love you! Fool, I love you, I adore you! ... The wife of Theseus loves Hippolytus! See, Prince! Look, this monster, ravenous for her execution, will not flinch, I want your sword's spasmodic final inch.'

In the third, Recitative, section, Phaedra wonders to her nurse Oenone how she will face her husband, and his son, with her love revealed, and again longs for death: 'How shall I hide my thick adulterous⁹⁰ passion for this youth, who has rejected me, and knows the truth! ... Oenone, I want to die. Death will give me freedom; oh it's nothing not to live; death to the unhappy's no catastrophe.' The final, Adagio, section sees Phaedra face her husband Theseus to exonerate his son and end her life: 'It was I, who lusted for your son with my hot eye. ... [Oenone] played upon my fears, until her pleading forced me to declare I loved your son. ... I've chosen a slower way to end my life – Medea's poison. ... My eyes at last give up their light, and see the day they've soiled resume its purity.'

⁹⁰Note that Lowell focusses on Phaedra's adultery rather than the incestuous nature of her passion.

5.4.1 Richard Alston and Benjamin Britten

In June 2015, I had the pleasure of speaking to the choreographer Richard Alston in his London studio about his choreography for Britten's *Phaedra*. Alston's respect and reverence for Benjamin Britten was apparent throughout our interview.⁹¹ In the programme notes for the performance at the Barbican in November 2013, Alston (born in 1948) describes his personal connection to the composer:

Britten is the first contemporary composer that I discovered as a young boy. ... I remember being incredibly overwhelmed by the very first performance of the *War Requiem*, which took place at the Coventry Cathedral. ... I don't want to sit still when I hear his music, ... I love the way he sets words ... when I read those words I will, in my imagination, sing them.⁹²

Although his motivations for choreographing the *Phaedra* were unabashedly economic, Alston did develop quite a connection with the piece and its characters. Having already chosen to choreograph *Les Illuminationes*, Alston had the freedom to choose anything Britten had written for string orchestra. He doesn't really remember how his attention was drawn to the *Phaedra* but he was immediately drawn to it both musically and as an opportunity to choreograph what felt like a scene from an opera.

Alston was very keen to do Britten's work justice, saying that he 'wanted to try and do something that Britten would have related to' and not 'impose something that was an alien idea' on top of Britten's work. He also saw in *Phaedra* a particular personal connection to Britten, saying:

I find her a very sympathetic character who finds herself obsessed and I think also that resonates hugely with Britten because Britten spent quite a part of his life being very uptight about sex and not being able to cope with W.H. Auden, not being able to cope with other 'out there' homosexuals, he found that very very difficult, and it was only getting together with Pears that was quite late in his life. So to me Britten's subject is often guilt, is often repressed feeling, and in that sense that's what *Phaedra* is absolutely about. She cannot tell, the only person she's really told is Oenone, and she gets the wrong advice from her.⁹³

⁹¹See B.1 for a full transcript of our conversation.

⁹²*Barbican Britten: Phaedra* programme notes, page 6.

⁹³Quotes taken from my interview with the choreographer in his London studio, 1 June 2015.

Alston was aware of Martha Graham's version, which I mentioned to him, and was inspired by the 'very strong link [she] made with Greek chorus', and saw his dancers as a chorus of sorts:

... the chorus that comments, that cannot affect things, but that can express their dismay and can invoke all sorts of judgements and explain and then also very often tell you the terrible things that are happening off stage. So I quite enjoyed that principle of using the dancers that way.

Despite this acknowledgement, there was a sense in our conversation that he found Graham's choreography borderline grotesque and was aiming for something far more reserved, saying with an almost dismissive laugh: 'I think some people possibly were disappointed because they didn't see any kind of rampant sex going on, but that was the whole point, she didn't do it, he said no, he never said yes.'

One of my questions in the interview was about Alston's source material, and he mentioned having read Racine and also visiting Britten's Red House to look at his score and the composer's copy of the Lowell translation of Racine, which had been heavily annotated:

... when I was there they had the score for Phaedra, which is cut down so it's a square because he was so ill that he couldn't reach the top of a score, he was so weak, and yet the thing is wonderfully scored, they cut down the score for him. That was extraordinarily moving to see. But also even more extraordinary was the paperback, the Robert Lowell paperback, with just little pencil lines under the lines that he had chosen to set. You realise how carefully he judged them.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the other 'silent' characters of the story became the focus of Alston's choreography, especially with the mezzo-soprano Allison Cook's willingness to move and work with the company, and we discussed the characters of Hippolytus, Oenone and Theseus in some detail across the interview. Alston was particularly dismissive of Theseus, describing him as 'a stiff old character', 'not an attractive character', and 'a kind of cipher – a king and a father and in both he was disapproving'. Alston also felt that Theseus' extreme reaction to call in Neptune was a 'weak point in the myth', 'so over the top' and 'such an extraordinary extreme reaction'.

Describing the dancer who was cast to play Theseus, Alston remembered with a smile: ‘James [Muller] was very good as Theseus ... he’s got a wonderful frown. He worries a lot when he’s thinking about movement. I said for once James I’m not going to tell you not to frown. That’s quite Theseus to have this self importance.’

He was, however, very intrigued by Hippolytus, describing him in slightly conflicting terms as follows:

He seemed to me really extremely beautiful and not very pleasant, he’s really very priggish and yet deeply into his own beauty. ... He was obviously very proud of his body and didn’t mind prancing around with no clothes on. Never mind that it was his stepmother, up until then he seemed to have been completely uninterested in women and absolutely about the goddess he worshipped. So that’s it. It’s very intriguing and very strange, that someone who is very puritanical and very very beautiful, a very strange combination.

Contrary to other adaptations, one of which I will be discussing in my final chapter, Alston was clear that race had not been a factor in his casting of a young black dancer as Hippolytus. Instead he chose Ishaan de Banya to make a statement about the universality of young male beauty:

I chose him because he was young, I chose him because I thought there was a sort of extraordinary dignity about the way Ishaan danced even though he’s very young. ... I very much enjoy the fact that dance can very easily cross cultural barriers. I like that very much. Unless there’s just no possibility I always try to make sure I don’t have an all-white company. I don’t think that’s a fair representation of the human race and you know, we all dance. ... It wasn’t like I chose it, oh I’m going to make Hippolytus non-white, but I do think actually what I think I was saying was, so this is supposed to be someone who is really beautiful and yes I think that all men of all colours and all races in different ways they can be really beautiful. So he can certainly be Hippolytus.

Oenone was also of particular interest to Alston, and in some ways was the role he considered most carefully. For her character he took inspiration from Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*:

I thought an awful lot also about Dido and Aeneas and that wonderful operatic structure and the fact that Belinda is so important. That there is

an attendant, there is someone who can support a heroine in trouble. Or an anti-heroine in trouble, whatever. So that's why I also thought it would be interesting to make Oenone, to make Nancy [Nerantzi], who's a very strong – and she's Greek – to make her the attendant who really expresses strong emotional feelings for Phaedra, her mistress. And who moves.

Alston had originally intended Nerantzi to dance Phaedra, before Cook got involved and Alston realised the piece would work better with Cook more integrated with the dancers. He described his process as follows:

At one point I thought of there being a singing and a dancing Phaedra and I thought Nancy would be amazing at that but then I said to Nancy, no, Allison's got an amazing presence and we can involve her moving without doing pirouettes and splits. That she can just move and be dramatically within the centre of it but then you can move much more being her friend, being her attendant, so I wanted her to be Oenone.

Despite Alston's personal interest in the non-speaking roles,⁹⁴ there is no denying that Benjamin Britten's composition prioritises the Phaedra character in choosing to set only her words to music. The scenes he chose from Lowell's translation highlight the queen's emotional struggle against her passion and her failed attempts to connect with those around her. There are five scenes in the short (13-minute) piece. In the prologue (which Alston described as having 'these amazing and wonderful chimes and this fantastically dramatic opening'), Phaedra describes catching sight of Hippolytus for the first time on her wedding day. In the first Recitative, Phaedra further describes how she was overcome by Aphrodite's passion, and her futile attempts to fight it. In the Presto, Phaedra addresses Hippolytus, declaring her madness and her love, and begging him to kill her with his sword. In the second Recitative, Phaedra addresses Oenone, distraught at the prospect of meeting her husband with his son aware of her 'adulterous passion'. And in the final Adagio scene, Phaedra addresses her husband as she is about to die, to implicate Oenone and clear Hippolytus' name.

Alston became increasingly drawn to Phaedra throughout the choreographic process, saying:

⁹⁴Alston clearly felt these silent characters were implicit in Britten's work, saying 'I took my lead from the fact that Britten himself wrote *Death in Venice* where there is basically only one singing character and the boy and the family and the other children and the mother are all silent. . . . I thought I've got to do the same sort of thing within 13 minutes.'

I found it impossible not to warm to Phaedra. She's incredibly aware of her own weakness and she's caught up in an obsession which she can't control. I don't find her a monster at all.

Allison Cook, the mezzosoprano who played Phaedra, was involved throughout the choreographic process, and it was in fact her willingness to take a more active role in the performance that led Alston to change his plans to have a member of the company dance the role of Phaedra. He described making 'all the choreography around Phaedra not dancing, moving yes, but in a way that she could be absolutely free to sing.' And it was clear throughout our conversation that Alston and his choreographic process were, however subconsciously, led by the female singing lead. In describing the process of choreographing the piece, he demonstrates how he prioritised Cook's needs and abilities:

I started with her [Cook], with all the dancers around her. And she walks forward and the whole situation is suddenly made clear. And then I really worked with her on where to move and how to be and where she would feel comfortable. She would say to me, can I not be standing here at this moment because this is a very quiet moment and I don't want to bellow it out, so I need to really make sure that I'm in contact. So she was very down to earth about that. And then when I'd plotted what I wanted to do for about five minutes or so of the piece, then I said I need you just to wait, I now need to tell the dancers what I want them to do. And there was this wonderful moment when Allison said, 'Richard that's extraordinary.' 'What's extraordinary?' 'They do what you say, singers never do that. They say, do I have to do that, – or is that really what my character is, or I can't really use my lungs if I'm in this position? You just say something and they do it.' And I said well, that's what we do, Allison.

If Alston's dancers were, as he described them, the chorus of the piece, taking orders and following directions, it was his singing and dancing prima donna who was allowed to call the shots. Her comfort, her needs, her voice, were of primary concern. Cook, as described by Alston, articulates this diva mentality even if she herself doesn't realise she has taken on precisely that role. At the end of our conversation, Alston articulated this concept even more clearly, concluding the interview as follows:

Allison was incredible; she was absolutely up for it, she was very excited, she's a very adventurous young singer. It was quite fun, I really treated her

like a diva. She wasn't a diva at all, but the designer and I said you can wear whatever you like. You want your dress to be like this, you can do whatever you like. We want you to be comfortable and we also want you to feel confident and dignified.

5.5 Conclusion

Fischer-Lichte notes a significant transformation in the theatre from the 1960s, which she describes as follows: 'The focus shifted from the dramatic text to the performance itself. Performance no longer was understood and defined by the text to which it referred, but by the relationship between the actors/performers and spectators.'⁹⁵ She also heavily emphasises the importance, transience, and unpredictability of live performance, going so far as to completely separate it from the text on which it is based: '...the medial conditions in a performance are completely different from those underlying the production and reception of texts, artefacts and objects.'⁹⁶ She also speaks of the rigid temporality of live performance:

Performance takes place between present-day actors and spectators. It is embedded and engrained in the actual cultural, social, and political situation much more deeply than texts and objects. Performance cannot be detached from its context under any circumstances, whether of a contemporary play or musical drama.⁹⁷

Fischer-Lichte's observations have particular resonance in the world of opera and modern dance. A libretto, more-so than a script, is a skeleton that cannot come fully to life until the music and vocal performance are added. We have seen how particular Phaedra performances had a profound impact on and resonance on their audiences, a connection very particular to the actress portraying her and the viewer so affected by that portrayal. Performances of modern dance and opera are prime examples of the importance of context, and we have seen in the particular case of modern dance how Martha Graham had a profound impact on the wider society and culture of her time.

⁹⁵Fischer-Lichte (2014), 19.

⁹⁶Fischer-Lichte (2010), 29.

⁹⁷Fischer-Lichte (2010), 31.

Fischer-Lichte, in her work on the transformative experience of live performance, also highlights the importance of an actor's presence, and connection to the audience:

When the spectators physically sense the energy emanating from an actor and circulating in the space among those present, they sense it as a mental as well as a physical force. They sense it as a transformative, and as such *vital* force emanating from the actor, and simultaneously as their own vital force. This is what we usually call experiencing the actor's PRESENCE. Through the actor's PRESENCE, the spectators experience the actors as well as themselves as embodied minds, as people engaged in the permanent process of becoming, and as living organisms gifted with consciousness.⁹⁸

Fischer-Lichte goes on to highlight the particular power of the voice:

A voice creates all three types of materiality: corporeality, spatiality, and tonality. The intimate relationship between body and voice becomes particularly evident when a person screams, sighs, moans, sobs, or laughs. Such sounds clearly involve the entire body as it bends over, contorts or stiffens. . . . Since the voice refers to a particular corporeality and rings out in a particular space, language cannot be analysed in the same manner as written text.⁹⁹

This can of course be true of live theatre, particular twentieth century theatre, about which Fischer-Lichte is primarily theorising, however, this chapter has also demonstrated the unique power of dance and opera to connect with the audience, particularly via the female lead.

The PRESENCE (to use Fischer-Lichte's emphasis) of these Phaedras is perhaps best summed up by the way in which the mezzo-soprano is often described in reviews and interviews about classical opera:

'Well, you know, singing is connected to the body. So there's a – there's a depth in the body that's necessary to perform this kind of music. And a lot of that expression comes from kinesthetic awareness. And it's – that's one thing that I think people identify with, and of course there's the moment you're in. And you don't have time to think.'¹⁰⁰

The Bulgarian-born mezzo-soprano Vesselina Kasarova has what is arguably the most distinctive voice in opera today. Her singing is neither

⁹⁸Fisher-Lichte (2010), 33.

⁹⁹Fisher-Lichte (2010), 34.

¹⁰⁰<<http://www.npr.org/2015/09/25/443410875/for-opera-powerhouse-dolora-zajick-singing-is-connected-to-the-body>>, 25 September 2015.

conventionally beautiful nor technically consistent. But her earthy, dusky-toned, vibrant voice is unforgettable and deeply affecting. . . . as Ms Kasarova warmed up, her singing grew increasingly confident. She is not a powerhouse exponent of bel canto in the manner of Marilyn Horne, but her smoky, shimmering voice is enveloping. The flights of floriture are never showy displays, but rather elegant elaborations of long-spun lines. In the tomb scene with Giulietta, some of Bellini's most pensive and quietly tragic music, Ms. Kasarova caressed the pianissimo phrases with plaintive, disarming beauty.¹⁰¹

'The American Julia Mintzer . . . was a true Carmen: extremely sensual, with the grace of a serpent, the violence of a tiger and a mezzo of penetrating depth.' -La Presse (Montrea)¹⁰²

'Waltraud Meier, the red-headed German mezzo-soprano best known for her portrayal of dramatically traumatic roles (where she gets to cause a lot of trauma on other people) like Kundry (in Wagner's "Parsifal"), Isolde (in "Tristan und Isolde"), and Ortrud (in "Lohengrin"). Physically graceful and arresting, Meier is a consummate stage animal with a knack for making it absurdly easy for her audiences to sympathize with her character no matter what murderous thing she seems intent on instigating.'¹⁰³

These quotations emphasise the visceral nature of the mezzosoprano voice, as well as the way in which these leading ladies forged a connection with their audience. All of these could have been used to describe the Phaedras we have looked at in the adaptations under discussion in this chapter.

This chapter has focussed on three very different works. Graham's ballet, with set design by Isamu Noguchi that is crucial to the performance, is both highly erotic and symbolic, exploring passion and sexuality through intense movement. Roumanis' work is largely grounded in the American traditions of jazz and big band, and at times feels more like a Gershwin musical than a traditional opera. And Britten's dramatic cantata, with Alston's choreography, provides a fusion of opera and modern dance. Here we have a particular type of female lead, not your typical prima ballerina or operatic diva, the delicate soprano who wafts her way through the drama, a damsel in distress until she is rescued by the male lead. This Phaedra is a more sexualised, dangerous diva, sung by a mezzosoprano or danced by an older or less agile lead, whose movement is

¹⁰¹<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/27/arts/music-review-with-poignant-sensuality\~romeo-the-star-crossed-lover.html>, 27 October 1999.

¹⁰²<http://www.juliamintzer.com/mezzosoprano-biography/>, first retrieved 9 June 2016.

¹⁰³<http://snn.bz/the-beauty-that-is-opera-today/>, first retrieved 9 June 2016.

made all the more powerful by the constraints placed on it by biology or experience. This is a more complex variation on the female lead, all the more intriguing due to the extra layers to her characterisation. These Phaedras are not Clément's controlled, undone women, but rather Abbatte's liberated, envoked women.

Chapter 6

The Metaphysical Turn

*A profound sense of the Divine government of the world, of a righteous power punishing pride and vice, pursuing the children of the guilty to the tenth generation, but showing mercy to the contrite – in short a mysterious and almost Jewish ideal of offended Holiness, pervades the whole work of the tragedians.*¹

Euripides has historically been seen as the atheist tragedian,² showing a distinct irreverence toward the divine and focussing instead on the human characters of his dramas, as Symonds summarises: ‘In Euripides [the power of the gods] degenerates into something more akin to a sense of vicissitudes; it becomes more sentimental – less a religious or moral principle than a phenomenon inspiring fear and pity.’³ The *Hippolytus*, however, features two goddesses, both of whom have a direct role in the drama. In this chapter, I explore the role of the gods and goddesses in adaptations of the *Hippolytus* and *Phaedra* tradition, focussing in particular on how recent adaptations move away from an earlier focus on psychology and human emotion to an emphasis on the supernatural forces in the wider world.

This analysis will benefit from a broadly ecocritical perspective, looking at the ways in which the most recent adaptations of the *Hippolytus* and *Phaedra* tradition take a much wider view of drama as subject to greater forces at work in the world,

¹Symonds (1893), 8.

²Although that perspective has been aptly brought into question by scholars such as Lefkowitz (1989) and Sourvinou-Inwood (2003).

³Symonds (1893), 9.

and the universe. In his introduction to ecocriticism, Greg Garrard summarises the field as follows: ‘the widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term ‘human’ itself.’⁴ Ecocriticism is also about moving away from a human-centred perspective on the world, and embracing natural forces in the widest sense of the word; as Garrard puts it: ‘Much ecocriticism has taken for granted that its task is to overcome anthropocentrism, just as feminism seeks to overcome androcentrism.’⁵

The process of reception itself, and particularly the way in which texts are re-visited and re-imagined by later writers and authors, can also be given an ecocritical reading, as Saunders (2008) argues in his work on Virgil’s *Eclogues*:

Through its active inclusion of new and potentially destabilising elements in the form of later readers, texts and events, moreover, this ecological understanding of literary process also distances itself from those versions of pastoral and bucolic that would seek to attribute to these literary kinds a view of nature as a stable, fixed entity that is variously unresponsive to, or incapable of sustaining the intrusion of, such ‘artificial’ influences as historical time or political process.⁶

Marranca makes a similar point in her *Ecologies of Theatre*: ‘A text, then, can be seen as an organism, and a collective of texts, images or sounds an ecosystem.’⁷ The very concept of nature, and what is natural, has also changed and, most importantly, broadened, over time. Saunders continues: ‘In the end, the *Eclogues*’ use of the cosmos as an arena within which to express and pursue their literary ambitions emphasises both the height and breadth of those ambitions.’⁸ Marranca again applies this reasoning to the theatrical context:

They do not imitate nature but create alternative worlds in which the different species lead autonomous lives, and there is writing to be read in rocks and trees and mountains and sand. What I am drawn to most are the concepts of field, space, landscape, especially as they contribute to a

⁴Garrard (2012), 5.

⁵Garrard (2012), 202.

⁶Saunders (2008), 7.

⁷Marranca (1996), xiv.

⁸Saunders (2008), 57.

theatrical and critical vocabulary that opens itself up to an ethical and spiritual vision.⁹

By looking at the world on a cosmological scale, (post)modern writers, as Virgil, set themselves up for grand claims not only about the natural world, but also about the nature of humanity, and the divine. A new kind of ‘spiritual vision’ thus emerges, one that acknowledges a metaphysical vision of a world in which humans are more connected both to nature, and to a new, more flexible, definition of the supernatural. In many ways this chapter will be about going beyond the divine. It could even be seen as raising the question: In this post-modern world, what God(s) do we worship?

These themes will be explored through four late 20th-century adaptations: Tony Harrison’s *Phaedra Britannica* of 1975, Ted Hughes’ *Phèdre*, written in 1998 and recently staged at the National Theatre with Helen Mirren in the title role, Edwin Morgan’s *Phaedra* translation into Glaswegian Scots of 2000 and Frank McGuinness’ *Phaedra* of 2006. In this material we see a move away from internal space and space as an extension of the self, to an expanded sense of space on a cosmological scale. Although the goddesses do have roles (sometimes speaking) in the earlier material, they are far more closely connected to the human characters than Euripides’ goddesses, and in fact display many human characteristics in their behaviour.

6.1 Gods in the Source Material

The role of the goddesses in the source material has been the subject of much scholarly discussion and debate. Roisman (1999) helpfully sums up the role of the goddesses, and the complexity of their involvement in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, as follows: ‘Aphrodite and Artemis form the outer circle of divinity that surrounds the human plot of the play. In a way they are stage directors, providing pertinent information to or hiding it from the human characters.¹⁰ But they are also characters in their own right, whose motives and personalities affect what they do and how others respond to them.’¹¹ Roisman is

⁹Marranca (1996), xvi.

¹⁰Cf. The character of Sir in Brian Friel’s *Living Quarters*.

¹¹Roisman (1999), 153.

one of many scholars to use the divine machinery in her analysis, going on to argue that the goddesses enable Euripides to construct his drama in a non-explicit, indirect way, her ‘tragedy of the implicit’.¹²

An early twentieth-century comment on the role of the gods in the play appears in the introduction to the *Hippolytus* by Hadas and McClean (1936) in their translation of the plays of Euripides:

Gods appear in this play and there is no explicit criticism of them. But what is the sensible hearer to think of one goddess that is spiteful and vindictive and another who is impotent to save her devotee and can only console herself and him with a promise to retaliate by outdoing her rival in vindictiveness? The burden of this teaching, a favourite one with Euripides, is expressed in a well-known fragment from our author’s lost Bellerophon: ‘Gods who do shameful things are no real gods.’ The inevitable contrast with a characteristic line of Sophocles is instructive: ‘No deed is shameful which the gods direct.’¹³

This assumption that Euripides, especially in the *Hippolytus*, was showing contempt for religion is a common one, although not without its critics. Another early twentieth-century translator of the *Hippolytus*, Warner (1949), begins his introduction by arguing, ‘It must not be assumed that, because, by human standards, the gods in this play behave badly, therefore Euripides was writing irreligiously or with any notion of ‘debunking’ popular belief.’¹⁴ Knox (1952) provides the following insight into the role of the goddesses in the play:

They have many aspects; they are anthropomorphic goddesses, myths, dramatic personalities with motives and hostile purposes and they are also impersonal incompatible forces of nature. They are indeed ‘mighty opposites,’ and that opposition may be expressed in many terms – positive and negative, giving and denying, increase and decrease, indulgence and abstinence – but what Euripides has been at some pains to emphasise is not their opposition, but their likeness. The play is full of emphatic suggestions that there is a close correspondence between them.

Knox cites numerous examples throughout the play, and concludes by emphasising how the similarities between the two goddesses, who on the surface seem so opposed,

¹²Roisman (1999), 153.

¹³Hadas and McClean (1936), 105.

¹⁴Warner (1949), 8-9.

emphasise their inhumanity:

They are opposites, but considered as divinities directing human affairs they are exactly alike. The repetitions emphasise the fact that the activity of Aphrodite and the passivity of Artemis are roles which will easily be reversed. ... From the law which governs their advance and retreat there can be no deviation; Artemis cannot break the pattern of movement to save Hippolytus, nor can she forgive Aphrodite. Forgiveness is in fact unthinkable in such a context; it is possible only for human beings. These gods are, in both the literal and metaphorical sense of the word, inhuman.¹⁵

Segal (1965) picks up on the similarities between the two goddesses noted by Knox in his detailed study of the way in which the recurrent imagery of oceans and birds binds the goddesses Aphrodite and Artemis to the poetic fabric of the play, and extends its meaning beyond the inward struggles of the protagonists to the questions of man's relation to the order (or disorder) of the universe.

Michelini (1987) has some interesting thoughts on the role of the goddesses, who play an uncommon role in the *Hippolytus*, as in two other Euripidean plays (the *Heracles* and *Bacchae*):

In [these three plays], by contrast, far from being benevolent and propitious, the gods behave in the style of old myth, as destroyers and tormentors of the protagonists. ... Along with a vivid portrayal of divine malevolence, we also receive strong intimations of the possibility of religious connection with the gods. ... In *Hippolytos* divine evil and divine beauty are divided between the 'bad' Aphrodite and the 'good' goddess, Artemis, with whom Hippolytos maintains a kind of mystical communion. But Aphrodite too is projected through the language and imagery of the play as powerful, mysterious, and *semnê*. In *Bakchai* this paradox is more frontally presented, in that the beauty of Dionysiac worship coexists and is coextensive with the horror of Dionysiac violence. ... This dual picture of the gods makes them seem at the same time both awesome and despicable.¹⁶

We have explored in earlier chapters the resonances between Hippolytus and Pentheus, and their destruction as a result of their failure to worship a particular god properly is undoubtedly one of the key factors that links the two characters. Euripides seems to be firing a warning shot in these plays as to what happens when humans play god and gods play human, when the lines between human and divine are blurred.

¹⁵Knox (1952), 29.

¹⁶Michelini (1987), 316-17.

In Seneca, Artemis is almost irrelevant, and Phaedra's relationship to Venus is cast in a very different light from Euripides. Boyle (1987) reminds us how 'in Euripides' *Hippolytus* Aphrodite bears no ill will towards Phaedra, whose death she describes as an unfortunate by-product of the retribution she exacts from Hippolytus (*Hipp.* 47ff.).¹⁷ In Seneca, although Venus does not target Phaedra as an individual, she does have a personal vendetta against Phaedra's family, which Phaedra feels she is being punished for. Phaedra's past, specifically the illicit love of her mother for the bull, is extremely important in Seneca's version of the play. Phaedra, by her very birth, is prone to illicit love (frequently referred to as *nefas*). Nature (*Natura*) is another key concept in the play, and in scholarship on it. The most comprehensive treatment of the theme of Nature in Seneca's *Phaedra* is provided by Boyle (1985) who compares a variety of passages where the word *natura* appears. His overall analysis casts Nature as a driving force of the action in the play (and sees many of the other forces, such as fire, as simply aspects of Nature).

As Boyle explains, even though Seneca does not have a direct divine role in his drama, his concept of the cosmos, integral to his Stoicism, is hugely prevalent across his drama. In *Phaedra* this can be seen in one of the choral odes, described in Pratt's overview of Seneca's drama: 'The chorus of the *Phaedra* contrasts the order of Nature with the moral chaos (978-88) of a world in which evil men have wealth and Roman political power (*fascēs*, 983), crime flourishes in the court, and virtue is unrewarded.'¹⁸ Like many ecocritics of today, Seneca's universe was one giant ecosystem of sorts, as Pratt summarises:

These physical conditions are those of a cosmos that is completely integrated and self-sustaining. It is a closed system, for its completeness is the sum total of everything it contains and nothing else. The infinite void surrounding it has no effect upon it. Rocks, man, soul, God, animals, plants, the constellations, and the virtues of wisdom, justice, courage, and moderation – all are forms of pneumatic nature, all are interrelated through the presence of *pneuma* structuring and vitalizing.¹⁹

¹⁷Boyle (1987), 145.

¹⁸Pratt (1983), 190.

¹⁹Pratt (1983), 50.

Pratt continues with detailed discussion of Seneca's *pneuma*, the power that sustains the universe:

Since *pneuma* is the source of continuity, order, life, movement, consciousness, and soul, the universe is pneumatic and therefore 'divine.' Its divinity is synonymous with its order, rationality, and beauty. These qualities are ubiquitous. The regular movement of the heavenly bodies; the beauty of the sun and moon or of mountain and valley; the continuous metathesis among the four elements from fire to air, from air to water, from water to earth, and back again through this series – all such features are aspects of a cosmos that is organized in the 'best possible' way.²⁰

This kind of way of viewing the world will be important to bear in mind as we look at the adaptation material in later sections.

In Racine, the gods play varied roles, combining elements from Seneca and Euripides. Phaedra knows she comes from a family ill-fated in love and when she is finally forced to reveal her passion for Hippolytus to Oenone, she cites Venus' historic hatred for the women in her family (lines 249-258). And although Phaedra feels a strong sense of guilt for her illicit passion, she again sees a divine role in her downfall, describing herself to Hippolytus as 'the hapless victim of heaven's vengeance' (lines 673-678). Racine also re-introduces the divine vengeance against Hippolytus which disappeared from Seneca:

So, although Racine has fundamentally altered the ground rules of Hippolyte's responsibility in his own downfall, he weaves important aspects of Euripides' conception of the young man's tragedy into his new pattern – and not just the oft-cited retention of Hippolyte's previous aversion to amorous involvement. Even the idea of Aphrodite's revenge on him makes an appearance.²¹

Phillippo quotes lines 817-822, which are largely adapted from Seneca *Phaedra* 406-23, with the reference to a vengeful goddess added.

²⁰Pratt (1983), 51.

²¹Phillippo (2003), 110.

6.2 Exit the Gods: Earlier Adaptations

In literature of the early modern period, incest could be seen both as an infringement against natural law and as the product of natural desires. It also played a role in the political sphere, where incest with a mother figure was configured as a way of deposing a father figure in Restoration drama. Edmund Smith (§2.2) expands the mythological references, drawing connections between Hippolytus' predicament and that of Adonis and Jason, and also brings in Mars as an allegory for the hero's military prowess. The laws of Nature are also important, and Phaedra's incestuous love for her stepson is seen as against Nature, whereas the love between Hippolytus and Ismene is in line with Nature and the cosmological order. Phaedra also channels her divine ancestry (Arsamnes, Minos, Jove, th'avenging Sun) in her rage against Ismene and appears throughout the play to have control of the divine powers rather than being controlled by them.

In Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* (§2.3), in contrast, a range of gods and goddesses feature as characters, exaggerating the mythic elements of the story. The opera opens with a chorus of nymphs of Diana and the goddess herself in rivalry with Amor, with Jupiter arbitrating between the two. Diana vows to protect Hippolytus and Aricie, even after Aricie is unable to carry through with her vow of chastity, having fallen in love with the young prince. Theseus' trip to the underworld is staged, with appearances from Pluto, a chorus of Furies, and Mercury (sent by Neptune to rescue the king). Neptune also takes the stage after Hippolytus' reported death to reveal that the prince is not dead, but was in fact saved by Diana. Here we see the gods actively involved in human affairs, in order to execute the happy ending that the eighteenth-century opera audience would have expected. And in the nineteenth century, where incest dramas became taboo and Euripides was rarely staged, we see an alternative divine element in Christianising readings of the *Hippolytus*, where the prince is seen to foreshadow a Christ figure. In the late nineteenth century, Walter Pater also reinserted the goddesses into his rendition of the myth: 'Pater retains Euripides' supernatural machinery and makes the tragic death of Hippolytus essentially a result of the *agon* between Artemis

and Aphrodite over a handsome young boy. As the sole desirable male object in a world of mortal and divine women, Hippolytus stands out as the unique and innocent sacrificial lamb. ...Pater's Hippolytus straddles the realms of the mortal and the divine, between being son, priest, erotic object of desire, and deity.'²²

In the twentieth century, the divine figures become allegories for human emotions. Psychoanalytical scholarship on the *Hippolytus* (§3.1) casts Artemis as a mother surrogate, allowing Hippolytus to achieve a longed-for reunion with his dead mother. In Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (§3.2), the forces of fate are represented by natural elements, which in turn serve to emphasise the contrast between the feminine and masculine forces in the play. The elms at the play's opening are described with almost human characteristics and seem to take the place of the two opposing goddesses that frame the drama in Euripides. Natural and domestic spaces (the farmland and the farm house) are feminised, representing the maternal force in the play. Ephraim is highly disturbed by this, where Abbie channels it to establish a connection with Eben through his dead mother.

In H.D.'s adaptation, *Hippolytus Temporizes* (§3.3) there are two divine characters, Artemis and Helios, and a Cyprian boy, who is a Cupid-like figure representing Aphrodite. As in O'Neill, the natural elements are associated with the feminine and contrasted to the formality (and masculinity) of the royal court. Hippolytus rejects his role as prince, preferring to remain outside on the seashore, which is symbolic of his rejection of his paternal/masculine side and his desire to identify with the maternal/feminine. The lines between the divine and mortal are conflated and blurred, with Artemis at times representing Hippolyta, and Phaedra seducing Hippolytus by pretending to be Artemis. Again, the divine characters are both representative of and subject to human emotions and desires.

Segal's structuralist reading in the late 1970s sees Hippolytus' problematised sexuality as disrupting the cosmic order of things:

Structuralism concentrates upon the logical relations within society and in

²²Østermark-Johansen (2014), 54.

the cosmic order. . . . in the *Hippolytus* they are called into question by the structural anomaly of the hero's place in society, his restrictive pursuits, and his limited religious and sexual orientation.²³

In this context Artemis is again reconfigured, this time as the only female partner acceptable to Hippolytus who is both drawn to more effeminate, passive (homosexual) pursuits such as horse-riding and undone by the masculine (heterosexual) active force of the bull from the sea. As we have seen in Chapter 4, this scholarly reading is prefigured in the work of Robinson Jeffers, where myth and ritual are integral. Many of Jeffers' plays are set in the strongly evocative Carmel-Sur, steeped in Native American history. In *Cawdor* (§4.2.1), his characters identify with the natural elements: Fera (the Phaedra figure) with fire and Cawdor/Hood (Theseus/Hippolytus) with stone. Animal images also abound in the drama, from the caged lame eagle who serves as an allegory for the damage within the family caused by Fera's love for her stepson, as well as the mountain lion (both a literal prey for Hood and as a way for Fera to find herself hunted by her lover, when she wears the skin of a dead lion).

In *The Cretan Woman* (§4.2.2), Jeffers' later version, the set specifically invokes the mythical past of the Greek original and Aphrodite is included as a character. The divine presence is strongly felt throughout the drama. The goddess is literally dazzling when she appears on stage and speaks. She emphasises the separation between the divine and the mortal characters as follows:

We Gods and Goddesses
Must not be very scrupulous; we are forces of nature,
Vast and inflexible,
and neither mercy
nor fear can move us.²⁴

Hippolytus in turn is suspicious of all divinities, due to the way they are worshipped:

I am little cold towards the divinities
That are worshipped at night, with grotesque antics;
the Goddess of

²³Quoted in §4.1.

²⁴Quoted in §4.2.2.

witchcraft, and the Goddess of Love –
Such a pair!²⁵

In this play, the humans attempt to set themselves apart from the divine forces that seek to control them, ultimately in vain. This irreverence, and (ultimately false) sense of control over their own fate, is thrown back as a warning from Aphrodite at the play's close:

In future days men will become so powerful
That they seem to control the heavens and the earth,
They seem to understand the stars and all science –
let them beware. Something is lurking hidden.
There is always a knife in the flowers. There is always
a lion just beyond the firelight.²⁶

Robinson Jeffers' work also lends itself well to an ecocritical reading, as he was a strong believer in the power of nature and sought to isolate himself from the civilised world: 'His reputation as a poet began to peak in the 1920s but declined in the 1930s and 1940s, perhaps in part because of his isolationist and more generally antiwar views, his antimaterialism, and his supposed misanthropy. He espoused a philosophy of "inhumanism", which stressed contemplating the beauty of the natural world and deplored anthropocentrism.'²⁷ Foley continues: 'Jeffers saw in Euripides an alienated author like himself. Medea's "barbarism", her isolation and alienation from the world around her, her forceful use of natural imagery (animals, bleak landscape, and stones), her emphasis on the oppressive aspects of democracy, which include dehumanizing Asian others, to some extent give Jeffers's own views voice.'²⁸

The divine plays a more direct role in the adaptations discussed in Chapter 5, but again more as a mechanism for highlighting human emotions, and the way in which the human characters are subject to these. Martha Graham's earlier ballet, *Phaedra* (§5.2), has a more overt divine presence; however the two goddesses both visually and physically serve as allegories of the ballet's opposing forces – chastity versus sex.

²⁵Quoted in §4.2.2.

²⁶Quoted in §4.2.2.

²⁷Foley (2012), 207.

²⁸Foley (2012), 209.

In George Roumanis' *Ode to Phaedra* (§5.3), Aphrodite plays a significant role and the medium of opera on television allows her influence on the action to be pictured alongside the musical cues (a cithara leitmotif) that signify her presence. Aphrodite's image is superimposed on the screen when her leitmotif plays, showing her control over the events; it is the goddess who blows the kiss that restores the Queen to life when she is presumed dead, and also the goddess who appears on screen playing her cithara as Phaedra dies in Hippolytus' arms. In contrast, all divine presence is absent from Alston's choreography for Benjamin Britten's *Phèdre* (§5.4). This piece is very much about the human characters; the words that Britten chose to set to music focus on Phaedra's emotional struggle against her passion and her failed attempt to connect with those around her; Alston's choreography reinforces Britten's vision rather than altering it in any way.

6.3 Re-enter the Gods: Recent Adaptations

In the recent adaptations under discussion in this chapter, divinity takes on a whole, new dimension, acting on what could perhaps be seen as a more modern concept of the cosmological scale. In these plays the gods don't have a specific agenda, they are instead divine forces that pervade the atmosphere of the entire play. These divine elements do not take sides, but they do have a profound effect on the drama of the plays under discussion. In a way these adaptations put into practice Segal's scholarly argument about the imagery of oceans and birds extending the meaning of the play beyond that of human interaction; and Boyle's Nature as a driving force is recalled in these recent dramatic environments.

6.3.1 Tony Harrison's *Phaedra Britannica*

Tony Harrison's indebtedness to Greek literature is much in evidence in his body of work, most notably his iconic 1981 adaptation of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. Harrison himself has admitted to finding great inspiration in Greek tragedy, in particular the way in

which Greek literature managed to maintain what he referred to as ‘a kind of celebratory route in the sensual and everyday to follow and emerge from their tragedy’.²⁹ Robinson (1999) adds that Harrison also ‘artfully entwined with these myths ... his own created myth: that of the figure of the lone, classics-reading scholarship-boy cum public poet going out to confront the horrors of our contemporary world and slaying, if not dragons then Gorgons, perhaps even reinventing himself as a kind of Perseus figure in the process’.³⁰ Harrison thus constructed a mythical sense of self which pervades his poetry.

He is also well known for using ancient myth and mythical figures to convey a political message, and the *Phaedra Britannica* provides an early example of this; the political element is strong here, as the setting of the play is shifted into, as Harrison himself puts it when setting the scene of the drama, ‘British India, a few years before the Indian Mutiny’,³¹ thus offering a powerful commentary on British colonialism.

Phaedra Britannica was first performed by the National Theatre Company at the Old Vic on 9 September 1975. The Hippolytus figure is called Thomas Theophilus, his surname in and of itself an ironic pun given the original character’s problems with the gods and love. The Phaedra character is the Governor’s Wife, or Memsahib as she is referred to throughout the play. Theseus is the Governor and Aricia is Lilamani, the daughter of the previous Indian ruler of the territory, whom the Governor defeated to take control. The Nurse is called simply Ayah, and Hippolytus’ comrade Theramenes becomes more of a tutor-figure called Burleigh. Harrison’s version of *Phèdre* is subtitled ‘after Jean Racine’ and Harrison attempts to echo the structure and style of Racine, with varying success, via the use of rhyming couplets in place of Racine’s alexandrines. The role of the Memsahib was played, in the premiere, by Diana Rigg.³²

In Harrison’s adaptation, the divine ‘mighty opposites’ that Knox described have a profound impact on the drama. Harrison embeds the opposites epitomised in Euripides by the contrast between Aphrodite and Artemis within the very fabric of his *Phaedra*

²⁹As quoted in Robinson (1999).

³⁰Robinson (1999).

³¹All quotes are taken from Harrison (1975).

³²For Diana Rigg as Phaedra, see also §6.3.2 below.

Brittanica. And just like the Euripidean Hippolytus was caught between the two divine forces, Thomas Theophilus' mixed race marks him as someone caught in between the dark primitive force of India, the ancestry of his biological mother and his love Lilimani, and the white colonial force of his father and the Memsahib, which is also part of his own history.

Thomas Theophilus is often referred to as a half-breed, as in this example from the Nurse figure speaking to her mistress:

If I thought that would rouse you I'd recite
 Thomas Theophilus day and night.
 Live, Memsahib, live. Mother love demands.
 Live and save your children from his hands.
 To let that half-breed Rajput colt control
 those who survived you should affront your soul,
 that cruel, heartless half-breed who can't feel
 grind Sahib's pukka sons beneath his heel? (Ayah, page 9)

The phrase 'half-breed Rajput colt'³³ also echoes the Greek name of Hippolytus.³⁴ Thomas' mixed race, much like his sexuality (or lack thereof) in Euripides and other adaptations, is what makes him strange, difficult to understand, and sets him apart from others. He is both too much and not enough Indian at the same time.

The race question also adds a new and different element to his relationship with Lilamani, the Aricia character, who is a pure Indian, and daughter of Indian royalty no less. She is even referred to as a child of India (page 16, 'India's red mud churned even redder with her children's [Lilamani's slaughtered brothers] blood'). Hippolytus references his own mixed blood when declaring his love for Lilamani and his support for her cause:

Though I'm ambitious I can never rise
 because of my mixed blood, my dual ties.
 ... So self respect and pride can brand a man
 as some unpacified barbarian?
 Wasn't my mother human just like yours?
 Am I some jungle freak that snarls and roars? (page 19).³⁵

³³Repeated on pages 14 and 31.

³⁴Thomas is also called a stallion, another indirect allusion to Euripides, on page 18.

³⁵Here also Thomas presents a harsh condemnation of his father's colonial role, saying he would, if

Here we also see a connection between his Indian ancestry and the monstrous – he is seen as somehow sub-human, a jungle animal, an image that returns in his conflict with his father. Jungle imagery is used throughout the play and largely replaces the sea-side imagery in Racine. This kind of animal imagery also pervades, for example in the below passage where the tiger stands in for the Minotaur and the jungle stands in for the labyrinth:

Everything she gave, I too would give.
I would have led you to exactly where
the monstrous tiger had its tangled lair.
I would have shown you every little twist
to where the jungle's deep and gloomiest (Memsahib to Thomas, page 24).

Thomas is also referred to as a tiger on several occasions (e.g. page 30, page 31, page 41).

Race imagery and animal imagery serve to emphasise the distance between Thomas and his father; the Governor uses words such as 'his kind', 'claims of kin', 'in his blood', 'blood-ties', 'lesser breeds' (pages 35-39). He even calls Thomas an animal as follows:

ANIMAL! / X³⁶ Now it all comes out!
The reversal everybody spoke about!
The lower self comes creeping up from its lair
out of the dismal swamps of God-knows-where.
It lumbers leering from primeval slime
where it's been lurking, biding its own time.
How could his kind absorb our discipline,
our laws of self-control, our claims of kin.
I've expected far too much. It's in his blood.
Control himself? I don't suppose he could.
One should have known the worst. One ought to know
that India once hooked in just won't let go
(Governor to Thomas, reacting to the Ayah's entrance displaying Thomas' sword as evidence of the rape, page 35).

Native can also equal untrustworthy, as in the case of the Ayah – the Memsahib uses phrases such as 'native guile and honied speech' (page 27) and refers to her as a snake

he had the choice, restore Lilamani's family to power: 'If I had any say | you'd be a *reigning* princess. Now. Today. | Your country gagged on blood. Blood, so much blood | even the sun-baked earth was turned to mud, | your brother's bloody gobbets and splashed gore | splattered like catsup from the cannon's jaw' (page 19). The repeated use of the word 'blood' here serves to reinforce Thomas' own connection to the plight of the Indians via his own 'mixed blood'.

³⁶These are breath marks.

on page 44 (and Lilamani does the same on page 46). The race element is also given an added dimension when the Governor (Theseus-figure) returns disguised as an Indian (page 31).

Race also serves to emphasize the difference between Thomas and the Memsahib, whose whiteness is emphasized; this word also has connotations of purity, and recalls the Greek word *agnos*, which is hugely important to the Euripidean play. The Memsahib wishes her heart was white (page 9), and she also laments how ‘India destroys white womankind’ (page 11). It can be no accident that the Memsahib refers to her passion for Thomas as ‘this black malaise’. Lilamani also refers to the Governor as one of ‘two white sahibs ... among dark multitudes’ (page 15). And the Memsahib sees herself as ‘too old, too white’ on page 41, after learning of Thomas’ love for Lilamani. Lilamani refers to ‘white tyranny’ on page 45 and ‘my mother’s gods are yours’ here using race to emphasize her connection to Thomas (on page 45).

Another manifestation of the divine ‘mighty opposites’ that pervade Harrison’s play is that between heat and cold. The heat of the environment is palpable throughout, and the light/sun/heat imagery is magnified in Harrison’s version, building upon and enhancing the burning imagery in Racine and Seneca. At the opening of the play, Burleigh comments, ‘This damned hot weather’s at its very worst’. The Memsahib is overcome by the heat when she first enters:

/ X no more / X I can’t. Must stop.
 No strength! / X Can’t move another step.
 Dazzled. My eyes. O Ayah, I can’t bear
 the sudden brightness. Sun. Light. Glare.
 Can’t, Ayah, can’t bear the light. The heat.
 I don’t seem able to stay on my feet.
 ... That’s where it all started, that red fire.
 / X / X blinding, consuming ... Ayah
 its light sinks in, right in, to scrutinise
 the sordidness concealed behind my eyes.
 This is the last time that I’ll have to gaze
 on those all-seeing, penetrating rays (pages 7-8).

This builds upon and enhances the burning imagery in Racine, which is largely taken from the Senecan version of the myth. Words such as ‘ember’ and ‘flame’ are used

(e.g. on page 9) as well as the word ‘fever’ to emphasize the heat (‘fever ward’ page 35, ‘fevered dreams’ page 41).

On the flip side, the threat of rain is ominous (‘They must be organised before the rain’, page 15) but also at times represents a cleansing effect (e.g. the Governor’s reference to the coming monsoon on page 40: ‘I hope whatever happens happens soon. | Then everything washed clean by the monsoon!’). The pervasiveness of the heat serves to represent Aphrodite’s influence over the majority of the play, and the rain/monsoon represents the cleansing influence that Artemis brings to the end of the Euripides. As mentioned above, the Memsahib describes her hell as a place where there is no monsoon – where she cannot be cleansed of the burning horror of her passion:

Close the shutters and black out the glare
 you feel it then as heat, and everywhere:
 the mercury a hundred in the shade,
 the grass screens sprayed with water, and resprayed,
 the hopeless, winnowing thermantidote —
 heat like some animal that claws one’s throat.
 There’s no escape from that all-seeing eye,
 that presence everywhere except to die.
 My Hell is India, always at high noon,
 with no relief of night, and no monsoon,
 and under that red sun’s remorseless stare
 mankind’s grossest secrets are laid bare.
 ... Father, forgive me. Please forgive me. Try.
 Harsh India’s destroyed your family.
 The same gods in your daughter. Recognize
 the lust they kindled blazing in her eyes (page 43).

And at the end she is cleansed by the rains as she dies, after exonerating Thomas – she even refers to her heart losing its heat, which can be taken to represent Aphrodite losing her power:

I wanted, needed to confess, and so
 I chose another, slower way to go —
 there’s poison in my veins, and beat by beat
 the heart that once was blazing loses heat.
 It’s all as if I saw you through dark gauze,
 through rain beginning like a slow applause.
 I hear it starting now, the rain, cool rain
 giving the blood-red earth new life again.

Rain. Rain. Like purdah curtains. When I die
the dawn will bring you all a clearer sky (page 53).

In contrast to the heat of the environment, and of the Memsahib's passion, Thomas is repeatedly referred to as ice cold (the image enhanced from Racine, although it is present there, e.g. line 1026). This coldness is also conflated with his race, as cited above – Lilamani, and his love for her, brings out his warmth, his Indian side, the very thing that connects them. The Memsahib mentions 'Such coldness! Such contempt!' in her shame after revealing her love to Thomas (page 27); the Governor refers to his son's 'chilly welcome' when speaking to the Ayah (page 36); and Lilamani herself refers to him, early on in the play (conflating the hot and cold images) as 'a piece of ice that will not burn' (page 16).

A personified India becomes the ultimate representation of one half of the 'mighty opposites' that pervade Harrison's play and give the divine a greater power here than in Racine and more akin to the Euripidean version. India is most commonly associated with the heat and fire of Aphrodite's passion, but also takes the place of Neptune in the case of the Governor's curse that will kill his son. It is India that is blamed for Phaedra's past and claiming the Memsahib as 'one of India's obscurer ills' (page 3); 'India's spirits' get at Thomas (page 4); the gods of India are referred to (page 8); India is blamed for what happened to Memsahib's mother and sister (page 11); and 'ravenous India' is blamed for Memsahib's passion as follows:

... My body froze, then blazed. I felt flesh scorch
as Siva smoked me out with flaming torch.
I sensed the gods of India were there
behind the throbbing heat and stifling air.
Heart beat like a tom-tom, punkah flapped
backwards and forwards and my strength was sapped.
I felt you mocking, India, you brewed
strange potions out of lust and lassitude,
dark gods mocking, knowing they can claim
another woman with the Judge's name,
picking off the family one by one
each destroyed by lust and Eastern sun
(Memsahib to Ayah after her love for Thomas is revealed, page 11).

India is blamed for the revelation of the Memsahib's love (page 24) and also for the

love itself (page 41). Some times India stands in directly for where Racine used Venus (e.g. page 28), and other times the allusions are more general. ‘India’ takes the place of Theseus’s ‘O heaven’ in Racine (page 33 and page 34), and it was also India that kept the Governor prisoner (page 34). It is also India that the Governor calls upon when he curses his son on page 37, and again on page 40 and as Siva on page 39. Siva returns on page 49 as the monster that emerges from the jungle (another important image). The Memsahib also says ‘my Hell is India’ on page 43 and blames India again for her family’s misery on page 43. Even the stage directions on page 44 refer to a ‘sense of India closing in’, which serves to emphasise the very depths of the Memsahib’s despair at this late stage. Ironically, Thomas sees his father as exempt from India’s power – ‘India’s dark gods’ won’t harm the Governor (page 22) – when it is these very gods who his father will call upon to bring about his son’s demise.

6.3.2 Ted Hughes’ *Phèdre*

Ted Hughes’ *Phèdre*, subtitled as a ‘version of Racine’, although structurally identical to Racine, uses typically Hughesian language to give the drama an element of poetry that is all his own.³⁷ The play was first performed by the Almeida Theatre Company in Malvern, England in August 1998, before moving to London’s Albery Theatre in September of the same year. Diana Rigg played the queen, echoing her performance as the Memsahib in Harrison’s adaptation as a younger woman over twenty years earlier. In a revival at the National Theatre in June 2009, Helen Mirren took on the title role.

Hughes’ poetry draws out the elemental, chaotic forces of the universe. Bergam describes Hughes’ language as follows: ‘Hughes has enhanced or introduced the semantic fields closer to his own interests – those referring to hunting, hunger and eating, poison, obsessions, the animal and, crucially, the labyrinthine and the monstrous.’³⁸ We shall see the importance of monster imagery in §6.3.3 below.³⁹ In this section I focus on the

³⁷In her so-called translation analysis of Hughes’ *Phèdre*, Bergam describes the work as follows: ‘With respect to Hughes’s other renditions of the classics – *The Oresteia* (1999) and *Alcestis* (2000), for instance – it appears as more literal, but compared to the academic, en-face transpositions, usually appearing in complete works, it might be classified more safely as an adaptation’ (Bergam (2011), 15).

³⁸Bergam (2011), 16.

³⁹On Phaedra and Theseus as monstrous forces in Hughes, cf. Bergam (2011), 20: ‘Thus, when

language of obsession, and more particularly, passion and love, and how these forces refract and replace divine power.

In particular here the power of love takes on an almost divine status in the play. Bergam argues that one of the attractions of Racine's play to Hughes might have been this ability to explore such primal forces: 'One may plausibly assume that he was attracted by the mythic substratum characterised by primal passion, physical violence and the relentless workings of Fate.'⁴⁰ Hughes showed an early interest in Aphrodite's power when he discussed the *Hippolytus* in his *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*:

[Euripides' *Phaedra*] recapitulates . . . the whole course of Aphrodite's feelings about Hippolytus – from before the Goddess' announcement of her revenge with which the play starts. Aphrodite's jealousy must originally have been love – becoming a jealous revenge frenzy (extreme in proportion to the love) only when it was rejected.⁴¹

And in the early exchange between Hippolytus and Theramenes in his *Phèdre*, Hughes expands the religious imagery at the end of the speech, casting Hippolytus as a sacrificial victim.

My lord
How am I to understand you?
Is this the man I know?
Is this Hippolytus?
Our Prince of Scorn, who laughed at love and lovers?
Who mocked the yoke that time and again

Hughes *Phèdre* reveals to Theseus: "I was the monster in this riddle" (87), her words should be taken quite literally, since both the sea-bull and the horses dragging Hippolytus to his death are incarnations of her hellish aspect. Theseus himself seems vaguely aware of this, when (only in Hughes' translation) he accuses her: "You are Hell itself" (87). By this argument, *Phaedra* is an avatar of the archetypal Great Goddess from the various mythico-religious traditions, whereas Hippolytus is a variant of her yearly sacrificed son-consort Adonis. A similar hypothesis is found in Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough*, where he argues that the "rivalry of Artemis and *Phaedra* for the affection of Hippolytus reproduces [. . .] under different names, the rivalry of Aphrodite and Proserpine for the love of Adonis, for *Phaedra* is merely a double of Aphrodite". Stretching this reading a little further and adapting it to Racine's play, Theseus could be seen not simply as "an unwitting link in the mythic circuit", as Hughes stated in his *Goddess*, but he male divinity in his destructive form, whose impact would account for the additions and the intensified violence of expression that characterise Theseus in Hughes's version.' Here we see how both *Phaedra* and Theseus are seen to have taken on quasi-divine roles in their own right. I shall return to this idea in §6.4 below.

⁴⁰Bergam (2011), 19.

⁴¹Gervais (2009), 308.

Bent your father's neck and brought him down
 On all fours, like any common man?
 Maybe Venus
 Has suffered your taunts
 A day too long?
 Maybe now she vindicates your father.
 Has she forced you,
 Even you,
 To kneel at her altar
 Bending your neck –
 Hapless, her sacrificial victim?
 Is she bringing the groans out of you?
 Are you in love?⁴²

Hughes enhances the presence of the gods; with phrases such as 'kneel at her altar' and 'sacrificial victim' he gives Venus a power more similar to the Euripidean original. This image of the sacrificial victim is not present in Racine and, as Bergam points out, not only foreshadows the hero's death, but also emphasises his role as 'passive and pursued' when compared to Phaedra as 'active and pursuing'.⁴³

Throughout his version, Hughes subtly alters the language to emphasise the power, and also danger, of love. As Bergam puts it, 'If the protagonist [Phaedra] is more implacable, as Aricia qualifies her, so is the goddess of love herself, whose cruelty and sadism Hughes never fails to emphasise'.⁴⁴ Love is a significant theme in Hughes' other work:

Hughes regarded love as a primal wound or 'hideous injury'. There's a poem of his that portrays sex as a cruel cosmic joke, with man and woman waking to find themselves being dragged towards each other across the grass, desperate for their bodies to join up. Phèdre is similarly helpless.⁴⁵

It is not just Phaedra he portrays as a victim to Love – Hippolytus too suffers his love for Aricia like an affliction. Hippolytus' love is described by Theramenes like an illness as follows:

In your eye there's a new kind of fire –
 Secretive, heavy, like an ailment.

⁴²All quotations taken from Hughes (1998).

⁴³Bergam (2011), 17.

⁴⁴Bergam (2011), 18.

⁴⁵Morrison (2009).

You try to hide it. But it is killing you.
 There is no hiding it. You are in love.
 Is this Aricia?⁴⁶

And Aricia too feels love's overwhelming power:

Ismène,
 What you say you might have imagined
 But I am famished for it, I devour it.
 ... Love had never interested me.
 My whole life I despised it.
 So I could almost thank him [Theseus] for his fears.
 He merely officialised my chosen life.
 But that – that was before I saw his son.
 The whole world admires Hippolytus,
 For grace, for beauty.
 They are his natural gifts – the more dazzling
 For seeming so unconscious.
 I was dazzled.
 I was even more dazzled
 By something richer:
 His father's strengths – without the weaknesses.
 But what dazzled me most, and I admit it,
 Was that pride – that flawless disdain
 No woman has ever touched.⁴⁷

The repetition of the word 'dazzles' (pages 23-24) gives Love an elemental, quasi-divine force that Aricia is powerless to resist.

The staging of the conclusion of Hughes' play at the National Theatre in June 2009 also served to bring home the powerful and destructive forces that had been at work throughout the drama. Although not explicitly called for in Hughes' text, there is linguistic suggestion, in Theseus' use of her name in the final line of the play, that Aricia is on stage during the final scene. The staging at the National Theatre had Aricia return to the stage during the final scene, her clothes torn and covered in blood, dragging what could only be Hippolytus' remains on stage, wrapped in a bloody sheet. Bergam describes this final scene as follows:

Of course, the body is the unmentionable element characteristically suppressed on the stage of French classicism, and again characteristically re-introduced in Hughes's insistence on psychological disintegration, but even

⁴⁶Hughes (1998), 8.

⁴⁷Hughes (1998), 23-24.

more so on hunger, appetite, animals of prey and the wounds they inflict. The body is literally dragged back onto the stage mutilated and deprived of its humanity in the recent National Theatre production of the play; it is where the monstrous is found, especially in the body of Phèdre, the body of woman, as Hippolytus seems to know⁴⁸

This visual image also calls to mind the end of the 2008 staging of the *Bacchae* (David Greig's translation with Alan Cumming as Dionysus), when Pentheus' dismembered remains are brought on stage by his mother. The visual link made between the death of these two characters famed for their irreverence strongly emphasises the power of the divine.

6.3.3 Edwin Morgan and Frank McGuinness

The divine power takes on a distinctly supernatural element in the adaptations of Edwin Morgan (*Phaedra*, 2000) and Frank McGuinness (*Phaedra*, 2006), where the realm of the monsters (both internal and external) underpins the dramatic action. The printed version of Edwin Morgan's adaptation of Racine describes the work as 'Translated from the French into Scots'⁴⁹ and Morgan himself very much saw his version as a translation, much in the vein of Hughes' version discussed above. The structure of his play exactly mirrors the Racine; he does not change the names of his characters, although their roles are translated and embellished in the transfer to the Scots language. Oenone and Ismene, for example, are both described as 'corrieneuchin-freen' to their mistresses, Phaedra and Aricie respectively. Like many Scots words that do not have a direct English equivalent, corrieneuchin is difficult to precisely capture, but translates roughly as one with whom one would have intimate conversations. This is especially apt for this play, where both women will bear their innermost thoughts and desires to their female companions.

Morgan described his decision to translate Racine into 'a Glaswegian-based Scots' as follows: '... partly hoping that the non-Classical shock of it will bring the characters back alive, and aiming, also, since the translation is quite close (though it may seem

⁴⁸Bergam (2011), 19.

⁴⁹All quotations are taken from Morgan (2000).

strange to pure anglophones), to find out what there is in this most remarkable play that survives and transcends a jolt into an alien register.’⁵⁰ Hardwick describes Isla Shaw’s set design for the Royal Lyceum Company production at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh (April 2000), as follows:

The designer conceptualised the translator’s approach in visual terms. The performance space was shell-shaped, built on a level with the Grand Circle (with safety net). The effect was therefore of theatre-in-the-round, linking the interior and exterior worlds.⁵¹

Hardwick also quotes Shaw as describing her set: ‘... as well as the Greek flavour I also wanted to create the feeling of an island or castle and of the way Phaedra is imprisoned by her emotions, or her fate.’⁵²

Frank McGuinness’ *Phèdre* was first performed at the Donmar Warehouse in London in April 2006, with Clare Higgins in the title role, with mixed reviews. Again the structure of this version, subtitle ‘After Racine’ is very similar to the French original, with changes most apparent, as in Hughes and Morgan, in the language used. The video backdrop, featuring ‘stampeding stallions’ alongside ‘scudding clouds and crashing waves’ was criticised in the Guardian review, but Higgins’ performance was highly praised.⁵³ It is perhaps no surprise that McGuinness’ version lends itself best to a strong actress.⁵⁴ In a lecture given at Oxford University, he described Electra and Clytemnestra in Sophocles’ *Electra* as follows: ‘I adored the fury of these women, the clarity of their eloquence engaged as they were in the brute demolition of each other’s truth.’ Of Higgins in particular, portraying Hecuba in another Donmar Theatre production, McGuinness says: ‘I had seen her work and respected it greatly for its astounding powers of concentration and the searing intelligence that allowed her to illuminate the deepest pits of darkness.’ McGuinness saw struggle against elemental forces, be they natural or divine, as somehow integral to the human condition. In the same

⁵⁰Morgan (2000), 7-8.

⁵¹Hardwick (2003).

⁵²Hardwick (2003).

⁵³<<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2006/apr/24/theatre>>, 24 April 2006.

⁵⁴Higgins was described in the *Guardian* review as ‘arguably the most recklessly exciting actress of her generation playing tragedy’s most reckless queen’ (see url above).

lecture he says, ‘For me, heroism is for show – courage is for survival’ and continues, speaking in particular of the courageous survival of Oedipus: ‘These last speeches are instances of astounding courage, for in them Oedipus dramatizes the extent of human suffering, how much as a species we can endure, how much we can survive.’⁵⁵

In their stagings, both Morgan and McGuinness bring out the elemental side of the drama, using set design or video to evoke the power of the sea, and thus visually calling to mind the monster that will emerge from the ocean to kill the hero. Morgan talks of how ‘monsters abound’ in Racine’s play – Theseus is a killer of monsters, Hippolytus is the son of a savage Amazon and meets his own monster at his death – and, even though Morgan asserts that this play is not about monsters but humans,⁵⁶ the monstrous element is strongly felt throughout his translation. Morgan was fascinated by what he termed the ‘monstrous underbelly’ of the *Phèdre*, picking up on the famous line (which he also used to describe his Phaedra in the cast of characters) which refers to Phaedra as ‘dochter o’ Minos an’ Pasiphae’, the mother who developed an ‘ungovernable passion’ for a bull. Morgan continues in his Preface: ‘when her daughter developed an ungovernable incestuous passion for her stepson, would it be surprising if she regarded this as “monstrous”?’⁵⁷

The monster imagery also serves to forge a connection between father and son. Theseus is described with ‘Monsters molocated, bandits banjaxed’ and Hippolytus feels in his father’s shadow, saying: ‘But Ah’ve gote nae deid dragons, no yit, | Tae gie me an excuse tae fall like him’ (page 14). And the connection is further strengthened when both men liken themselves to monsters in the eyes of others: ‘Ah’ve suffert the wyte of bein prood, aloof | But shairly no that Ah’m some moansters git?’ (Hippolytus confessing his love to Aricia, page 30) and ‘An whit dae Ah fin but fowk that grue and girn, | They rin fae me, they say naw tae a hug. | They seem sae feart; is it a moanster

⁵⁵My thanks to Fiona Macintosh and the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) for the lecture transcript.

⁵⁶‘...such is the alchemy of the play that we find ourselves deeply involved, not in monsterland, but in the recognisable emotional cross-currents of a tightly knit group of human beings’ and ‘...[this translation] used a Glaswegian-based Scots ...partly hoping that the non-Classical shock of it will bring the characters back alive’ (Morgan (2000), Preface).

⁵⁷Morgan (2000), Preface, pages 7-8.

they take me fur' (Theseus arriving home, page 47).

Phaedra is also described as a monster, although ironically Theseus can only see the monster in himself and in his son, not in his wife (Hippolytus describes her 'Phaedra comes from a mither an a family | merr moanstrous nor mine' in the argument between father and son, page 54). Aricia too sees Phaedra's monstrous nature, though is again unable to get Theseus to fully appreciate it: 'Ivrywan knows yir ethnic cleansin' o moansters. | But ye didn't cleanse them aw, ye still left | wan' (page 65). Theseus, the great slayer of monsters is unable to recognise the one destroying his own house. And in the end, much like Hughes' portrayal of love as a deadly elemental force, love is the true monster of Morgan's play as well, which concludes with Phaedra revealing to her husband what turned her into the monster she has become: 'a gode lit the deadly love in ma briest' (page 71).

McGuinness' *Phaedra* also enhances the power of Venus, casting her not only as a vengeful goddess but also (conflating her with Artemis' role in Euripides) as a huntress. There is also a particular emphasis on the role of the hero as slayer of monsters – both Theseus and Hippolytus take on this role – and, interestingly, Phaedra is both monster and prey for both Venus and Hippolytus.

Theseus is first described as the servant of Venus: '...the father – who has he always served? | A certain goddess – name of Venus – that's who' (page 5). Theseus' heroism, as in Morgan, is also defined by his power in slaying monsters, when he is described by Hippolytus as follows:

Saving Greece, saving all and sundry,
Killing what needed to be killed –
Madmen and monsters, the beast of Crete,
The Minotaur's blood – you spared nothing.
... Theseus is an almighty man –
That absolves him of all his crimes –
Monsters died at his hands (page 6).⁵⁸

In contrast, Phaedra is described as an enemy of Venus, and immediately we see imagery of her as Venus' prey:

⁵⁸All quotations taken from McGuinness (2006).

Venus hates me – she’s angry –
 She’s out for blood – human blood.
 She perverted my mother.
 ... I am the last of my breed to die.
 The last and most lost.
 Venus wants that – she gets that (page 13).

The image of Venus as a huntress, out for human blood, is strengthened in a later scene, where Phaedra says of the goddess:

It was herself, Venus, breathed me to life.
 She hates myself – she is a hound that hunts me.
 ... Venus has caught her prey by the throat –
 She will shake me stupid into sinning (page 15).

These images recall Seneca where Phaedra threatens to hunt Hippolytus even in the underworld after their deaths, but the image of the huntress also recalls Artemis, goddess of the hunt, who served as Hippolytus’ ally in Euripides.

This image returns in Phaedra’s confrontation with Hippolytus, where she casts herself as a monster for him to kill:

A hero gave life to you – honour him –
 Punish me for this pernicious love –
 Rid the earth of this ridiculous creature.
 Finish this monster who means you harm.
 The widow of Theseus woos his son –
 I am your Minotaur – you must slay me (page 30).⁵⁹

Here Phaedra gives Hippolytus the chance to attain the heroic stature of his father – heroes kill monsters, and this is Hippolytus’ chance to match his father’s heroic glory. Later on, Phaedra calls on Venus, previously her huntress, to join forces with her to hunt Hippolytus together:

Great Venus, your cruelty will not cease.
 Do you want more glory, golden girl?
 There is a man more disobedient than me.
 Hippolytus – he laughs in your angry face.
 He runs away from you – attack him.
 ... Take your revenge – we can act as one.
 Give him love – (page 36-7).

⁵⁹The connection between Phaedra and the Minotaur returns again on page 49 where she is described as having the Minotaur’s blood in her veins, through her mother.

Here Venus is cast as the hero, achieving glory by slaying her own monsters – first Phaedra, and now Hippolytus (who Phaedra herself calls a monster on page 49: ‘I see a demon – monster – in my eyes’). And as in Morgan, Phaedra is also the monster that Theseus cannot see, and has missed, as Aricia says to him: ‘You believe you are invincible | Monsters have fallen at your feet – | Not all were destroyed – you let one live’ (page 60). And as the play closes, Phaedra again realises she is the monster who most deserves to die: ‘I am an outrage to holy heaven’ (page 68).

6.4 Conclusion: Tragedies on a Cosmological Scale?

It is clear that the role of divinities has been an important topic of discussion within the scholarship on and the reception of works written within the Hippolytus and Phaedra tradition. However, I have also shown that the way in which the divine plays a role in the drama has differed significantly across the centuries, resurfacing and expanding dramatically in the recent adaptations that have been the focus of §6.3.

In Euripides, and many of the earliest adaptations, the gods and goddesses are characters in the drama, directly shaping the action. This kind of intervention is visible, for example, in Rameau, who expands the divine cast of characters to include not only Diana and Amor who find themselves in conflict from the beginning of the drama, but speaking roles for Jupiter, Pluto, the Furies, Mercury, and Neptune, who brings about the peaceful resolution at the end by revealing Hippolyte is not dead.

We see this aspect of divine intervention in a more modern work in the form of the character Sir in Brian Friel’s *Living Quarters* of 1977, although his is more of an attempt to control the action recorded in the so-called ledger and his power is compromised by the unwillingness of the characters to stick to his story. The characters themselves have created the ledger, the record of past events that will control and structure their actions as they recreate these events in an attempt to gain understanding of their tragedy.⁶⁰

⁶⁰As Sir says in his opening monologue: ‘... in their imagination, out of some deep psychic necessity, they have conceived this (*ledger*) – a complete and detailed record of everything that was said and done that day, as if its very existence must afford them their justification, as if in some tiny, forgotten detail buried here – a smile, a hesitation, a tentative gesture – if only it could be found and recalled – in it must lie the key to an understanding of *all* that happened’ (Act One, 177). Cf. also Lloyd

The very fact that Friel's characters do know what is going to happen, however, makes it impossible for them to resist the temptation to change, if not the final outcome, at least the order of events. This is the ultimate paradox of Friel's play, as Sir notes: 'no sooner do they conceive me with my authority and my knowledge than they begin flirting with the idea of circumventing me, of foxing me, of outwitting me. Curious, isn't it?' (Act One, 178).⁶¹

And even if not as actual speaking characters, plays such as Edmund Smith's use a litany of divine figures to enhance the sense of distance between the tragedy and real life, particularly important at a time when incest, however common it might have been in reality, was a controversial subject unsuitable for overt portrayal on the stage. As Knox (1952) argues, the gods in Euripides could be seen both as anthropomorphic figures and as forces of Nature – he refers to these as the 'mighty opposites', both different yet alike (and we have seen how this is played out in the modern adaptations looked at in detail in this chapter). Michelini (1987) saw in the gods and goddesses of Euripides *Hippolytus*, *Bacchae*, and *Heracles* in particular the destroyers and tormentors of old myth, demonstrating both the beauty and horror of religious experience. This paradox can also be seen in modern adaptations, such as in the power of Harrison's India both as a place of unbearable heat and cleansing monsoon.

In Seneca and Racine, as in most modern adaptations, the goddesses do not have direct speaking roles. Artemis takes a back seat and the focus is Venus' personal vendetta against Phaedra's family. Seneca also introduces *Natura* as a driving force, which is analysed extensively in Boyle (1985). In Racine, as argued by Phillippo (2003), both Hippolytus and Phaedra are portrayed as victims of divine wrath. In the earlier part of the twentieth century, the gods as they were portrayed in the source material and the earliest modern adaptations fade away, to be replaced either by allegories for human emotions, such as Eugene O'Neill's elms or the highly sexualised images of Martha Graham's Phaedra ballets, or dissolved into a ritualistic background such as the Carmel Sur setting of Robinson Jeffers' *Cawdor*. Even the adaptations that give

(2000), 247-251 on the role of Sir and the ledger in the drama.

⁶¹All quotations taken from Friel (1996).

the goddesses a role, such as H.D. or George Roumanis, strongly humanise their divine figures, making them subject to or emblematic of the humans they serve, or even merely a plot device (Roumanis himself admitted that Aphrodite's kiss to revive Phaedra was primarily to enable a trio between the production's three main, human, characters).

In the post-modern adaptations under discussion in this chapter, however, we see a resurgence of the power of the divine, if not the gods and goddesses themselves, which takes us back to the very themes scholars have explored when looking at the role of the divine in the source material. We see in these works Knox's mighty opposites and inhumane divinities, Segal's relationship between man and the order/disorder of the universe (emphasis on the disorder), Michelini's divine malevolence and aspects of Boyle's *Natura*. Yet, just as Artemis ultimately could not save Hippolytus in Euripides, the divine forces at work in these modern productions overwhelm rather than emancipate the human characters. Furthermore, divine power mutates into more universal, cosmological forces with their own power and agency. In Harrison, for example, the humans are rendered powerless – both from within their very nature (emphasised by race) and subject to external elements of hot and cold; and the external forces overcome the internal – the Memsahib's whiteness is no match for the forces of heat and fire (the Indian elements) and Thomas' father can only see his son's dark, hot-blooded Indian side, capable of incest, rather than his innocence.

Hall, in her analysis of the *Trojan Women*, speaks of this widening of perspective on divinity, present in Hecuba's scepticism of divine power in Euripides' original, and ever more important in recent re-tellings of Greek tragedy:

Hecuba's metaphysical bafflement anticipates the entire future of the medium; indeed, in his recent study of tragedy Eagleton proposes that tragedy can only survive as a valid art form in the twenty-first century if marked by metaphysical openness. Tragedy that suggests metaphysical answers derived from any single religious or philosophical perspective is unlikely to have anything profound to say to the postmodern, multicultural global village.⁶²

These recent adaptations show human emotion on a cosmological scale, with the power

⁶²Hall (2007), 17-18.

of the divine fragmented into the elemental forces of nature, and humans reduced to their most basic, at-times monstrous, instincts in their vain attempts to resist such forces. Hall goes on to argue that the vertical axis which marked: ‘a metaphysical separation between the two planes of existence within the stage world: the groundling level of the mortals, and the supernal plane of the gods’⁶³ never quite disappears in the subsequent tragic tradition. In the recent adaptations we have examined here, however, the planes do blend and blur, with divine forces associated with basic, natural elements, and human characters taking on quasi-divine characteristics in the monsters they become.

What exactly does this say about divinity in these (post)modern contexts? Why, in the modern era, has the role of the divine become such an important focus? Part of the answer to this question may lie in recent applications of chaos theory to reception studies. According to Hesiod, separation between gods and men was good for the order of the universe, and the two were meant to be opposite ends of the spectrum.⁶⁴ Heroes and monsters were two types of hybrids that violated these boundaries, from opposite ends of cosmological time – the monsters coming out of the early, wild days of the cosmological beginnings, and the heroes coming from the later period after Zeus had taken control of his fellow divinities and separated gods from men. Clay (2003) speaks of Hesiod’s so-called hybrids as follows: monsters were ‘negative exemplars’ or ‘failed experiments in the course of cosmic evolution’ and a ‘glimpse of what an unregulated cosmos might look like.’⁶⁵ She continues to suggest that it could not be accidental that in Hesiod’s *Theogony* ‘cacophonous, flame-spewing Typhoeus, who represents a kind of throwback to such disordered creatures, constitutes Zeus’ last adversary.’ Of humans, she makes a similar point, speaking of how the female divinities acted as ‘destabilising forces’ and ‘all unions of goddesses and mortals are potentially threatening to Olympian stability and serenity.’⁶⁶

Liveley (2002) quotes a chaos theorist as follows:

⁶³Hall (2007), 26.

⁶⁴Cf. Clay (2003).

⁶⁵Clay (2003), 161.

⁶⁶Clay (2003), 164.

In a time of collapsing explanatory and ideological paradigms and certainties, a theory which stresses built-in unpredictabilities seems both necessary and congenial to a post-Newtonian, post-Freudian, post-Marxist and post-modern world-view.⁶⁷

And for chaos theorists, chaos theory is not just about disorder, it is about the opposition between order and disorder, and the ability for these two traditionally polar opposites to co-exist – ‘there may be order and predictability in the midst of chaos, and there may be disorder and unpredictability in the midst of order’⁶⁸ – just like Hesiod’s heroes and monsters represent a tense co-existence between the divine and the human; just like Knox’s mighty opposites are so alike and different at the same time, just like Harrison’s India of heat and monsoon; just like Morgan and McGuinness’ monstrous monster-killers. Liveley’s analysis primarily uses chaos theory as a lens through which to explore Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: ‘from this perspective, metamorphosis may be seen as a process that does not permanently or straightforwardly “fix” a human character into a new form: it may be seen to prompt an oscillating, ever changing point of view that recognises the wolf in the man and the man in the wolf.’⁶⁹ We see this in the man/monster dichotomy explored in these Hippolytus and Phaedras too, where there is always a bit of both.

This metaphysical concept of nature and the world also lends itself to a further blurring of lines, not just between gods and mortals, but also between life and death. This can be seen in particular around imagery of the sea: ‘the sea has an ambivalent character in Greek culture. It is a source of food and a path of communication, but also a disquieting empty and barren space that evokes death and can even lead to Hades.’⁷⁰ Beaulieu continues:

This book takes up the issue by proposing that the sea is a mediating space in Greek mythology. It separates the visible and the invisible worlds and marks the difference between men, gods, and the dead. As an intermediary space, the sea integrates elements of all the areas it separates. For this reason, the Greeks characterize the sea as both fertile and barren, as

⁶⁷Liveley (2002), 28.

⁶⁸Liveley (2002), 29.

⁶⁹Liveley (2002), 35.

⁷⁰Beaulieu (2015), 2-3.

a directionless path, and as a deadly force that can nonetheless lead to immortal life.⁷¹

Reception in the (post)modern world is very much about redrawing boundaries, or even at times eliminating them; the seashore is one useful example. Concepts of divinity can only be understood in the context of these recent adaptations by re-imagining what is meant by divinity, how the divine is defined.

Humans in the adaptations discussed in this chapter are not pawns of external divine forces, exerting their control on the world of mortals, but the divine are also not completely internalised into emotional forces, like in the psychoanalytical or (homo)sexual readings explored in earlier chapters. In the post-modern world, divine forces become fragmented and identified with the forces of the natural world. Holmes here is helpful: ‘I’m more interested in how feedback from the world outside us and our own bodies enables external or non-subjective forces to exercise their own agencies on the ideas and objects we live with in more or less critical ways.’⁷² Holmes continues: ‘I do not know how else to describe what I’m doing in my work if not as the building of worlds that bring sometimes unusual constellations of ancient texts together with live elements in the present in creative symbiosis.’⁷³ Here again we see barriers between previously distinct realms (human and divine, human and animal, or even heaven and earth) and new concepts of the world being built. This way of thinking and understanding the world, in a way, echoes the membrane of receptions with which I began this thesis, now on a cosmological scale. The modern world is a complex organism, containing a range of forces, many difficult to define or separate out, connecting and interacting in a multi-dimensional, fluid way, manifesting itself in different shapes and forms depending on an individual’s particular way of looking at and experiencing the world around them.

In her article, ‘The Voices we Hear’, Timberlake Wertenbaker reflects on the attraction of Greek tragedy in the modern era as follows:

⁷¹Beaulieu (2015), 16.

⁷²Holmes (2016), 281-2.

⁷³Holmes (2016), 285.

... we are beginning to feel what the Greek playwrights suspected but feared to say all along: the human being may perhaps be unknowable – unknowable and ultimately irrational. And it is a terrible thought. Because if unknowable, if irrational, then no amount of science, philosophy, or politics, will make us better, will make us behave better, will give us self-understanding to behave better.⁷⁴

Perhaps in this increasingly godless, chaotic world, post-modern playwrights turn to the supernatural of Greco-Roman antiquity to explain the inexplicable range and randomness of human actions and emotions. Maybe Hippolytus and Phaedra in these adaptations show there is a monster inside us all?

⁷⁴Wertenbaker (2004), 366.

Chapter 7

Epilogue

Roberto Cavosi's *Bellissima Maria* has been described as an 'existential purgatory' where there is 'no concept of time,' and reality and dream are blurred and fused.¹ *Bellissima Maria*, which won the prestigious Italian Riccione Theatre prize in 2001, is part of a trilogy, which also contains an *Antigone* adaptation; in a recent interview Cavosi spoke of his particular attraction to strong female characters, saying that he prefers to write about women as they are much more interesting, and he would need at least five men to match one woman.²

There are three characters in Cavosi's adaptation, Maria, the Phaedra character, Patrick, the Hippolytus character, and Rocco, the Theseus character. Rocco is a private investigator who worships his young wife, who works from home as a seamstress. The two met on the dance floor, and dance (as well as Rocco's handmade dancing suit and dancing shoes) are important images in the drama. Cavosi not only explores physical attraction via bodily fluids, such as sweat and tears, but also plays with time, giving his production an other-worldly feel. Characters are both dead and alive, or on the threshold between the two – Rocco spends the play developing photographs of and investigating what turns out to be his own death at the hands of Maria and Patrick.

Rocco starts the play innocently believing in his wife's incapacity to betray him,

¹Introductory remarks by Marina Warner at the rehearsed reading of an abridged version of Roberto Cavosi's *Bellissima Maria*, translated into English by Jane House, starring Marco Gambino and Sasha Waddell, St Hilda's College, Oxford, June 2016, with a pre-performance talk with the playwright and translator, chaired by Marina Warner.

²Interview with Marina Warner, St Hilda's College, Oxford, June 2016.

saying: ‘When she loves it’s with her whole heart and soul. She’s not capable of being unfaithful . . . its not in her nature.’³ This turns out to be profoundly ironic, as Maria’s nature is precisely to betray her husband. At one point she says to Patrick, ‘to sooth the beating of your heart you have to be deceitful, monstrous.’ At the same time, Maria is also cast as a kind of Christian martyr, not least in her renaming which echoes the Virgin Mary; her hands are pricked by her sewing like Christ’s stigmata and she herself says towards the end of the play, trying to explain herself to her husband: ‘I would have been a humble Mary Magdalene, free of sinning, not sinning.’ Cavosi saw Phaedra as a kind of combination of Eve and Mary; pure despite no longer being a virgin.

Death in the play is highly subjective, not just because of the lack of a linear timeline, but also through the language used throughout. Rocco says ‘I’m not dead, I couldn’t die’ and towards the end of the play Patrick says prophetically: ‘Remorse is a shadow that kills without letting you die.’ There is also animal imagery in the conflict between father and son, which takes place in the boxing ring. Sparring with Patrick, his son a reluctant participant, Rocco continues: ‘Too old, am I? I’m not old. I’m a wild beast.’ The boxing seems to make this man, who has in one temporal plane already been killed, feel vibrantly alive, shouting: ‘I’m alive, I am! I’m alive, I’m alive!’ This is echoed at the end of the scene, after Rocco, in embracing his son, has recognised his wife’s scent and therefore her adultery, and Patrick begs his father: ‘Let me live, Papa! Let me have my life.’ The play ends with an almost hypnotic dance between the three characters, with Maria centre stage.⁴

In Krzysztof Warlikowski’s *Phaedra(s)* for the Odéon-Théâtre de l’Europe, starring Isabelle Huppert, the works of three authors are merged to form a triptych: the British playwright Sarah Kane, the French writer, director and actor Wajdi Mouawad, and the South African author J M Coetzee. The play opens with Huppert as Aphrodite, described in the programme as ‘a primeval presence . . . Ancient and contemporary, she mixes words from the myth with those of “a metaphysical pornography”.’⁵ The

³Rehearsed reading of Jane House’s English translation, St Hilda’s College, Oxford, June 2016.

⁴A strong visual echo of Martha Graham’s *Phaedra’s Dream*, where the Stranger has been compared to a Theseus character.

⁵Daniel Louayza’s essay from the programme for the June 2016 performances at the *Barbican*.

language is laced with profanity, with Aphrodite at one point describing the universe as born from her cunt. She and Hippolytus, who speaks from an enclosed glass box, only viewable at this point via a video projection, share a disillusionment with the disintegration of the modern world order. Aphrodite morphs into Phaedra on stage, with Huppert simply removing a jacket and sunglasses and putting on a nude slip. The Hippolytus actor returns to the stage as a black dog to encourage Phaedra to give in to her passion; in her frenzy the Queen murders the animal, who then morphs into Hippolytus himself, in a dream sequence where the Prince and Queen lie in bed together.

Huppert returns to the stage as Sarah Kane's Phaedra; the action of the second part is largely set in the glass box which has moved to the centre of the stage. Phaedra serves as narrator as well as actor in the drama. After her death in the second episode, she can be seen watching the action on a video projection on the back wall.⁶ An exotic dancer is present on stage throughout, and in between the three sections dances wildly in an extended, almost Bacchic, frenzy, to pulsing drums. In the final section, Huppert returns as the bookish writer Elizabeth Costello, talking about couplings between gods and humans. She says, humorously, she is more interested in the 'mechanics' than the 'metaphysics' and goes on to graphically imagine how such sexual acts would work. Huppert takes on one final Phaedra, as Costello removes her glasses and lets down her hair to give an impassioned monologue from Racine.

In both of these very recent performances, the metaphysical turn is brought to the fore. Time is fluid; humanity, mortality, divinity, and life and death themselves, are all called into question. The distinctions between gods and mortals, between humans and animals, all evaporate. Elizabeth Costello, in the guise of Racine's Phaedra screams, 'J'aime' at the top of her lungs, and begs Hippolytus to 'deliver the world from a monster so odious.' As Phaedra narrates the stage directions, sat on a chair in the midst of her family (Theseus, Strophe and Hippolytus), whose horrific deaths she describes in a blank monotone, Sarah Kane's Hippolytus barks like a dog and screams:

⁶She wears sunglasses, which recall Huppert as Aphrodite at the opening of the play; this superimposition also recalls Roumanis' Aphrodite in *Ode to Phaedra*.

‘If only there could have been more moments like this.’ Just like the dream sequence in the ‘Purity’ scene of first episode, where Phaedra stabs Hippolytus at the moment of orgasm, it is in death that Hippolytus comes most alive.

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Appendix A

Source Text Plot Comparison

Euripides' <i>Hippolytus</i>	Seneca's <i>Phaedra</i>	Racine's <i>Phèdre</i>
Prologue: Aphrodite promises to take vengeance on Hippolytus for refusing to worship her by filling Phaedra with a passion for her stepson.	Hippolytus opens the play with a hymn to his beloved goddess Diana.	Hippolytus is determined to leave Troezen to find his father. He also confesses his love for his family's sworn enemy Aricie, which adds to his desire to flee. His companion persuades him to say goodbye to Phaedra before he departs.

Euripides' <i>Hippolytus</i>	Seneca's <i>Phaedra</i>	Racine's <i>Phèdre</i>
Hippolytus affirms his devotion for Artemis.		
Phaedra enters 'in delirium' and the Nurse attempts to find the cause; eventually it is revealed that she loves Hippolytus.	Phaedra enters and reveals her love, citing a number of reasons from her ancestry to the stepson's resemblance to his father.	Phaedra enters barely able to stand and determined to die. Her Nurse, however, persuades her to reveal that the cause of her illness is a love for Hippolytus that she is determined to resist.
Phaedra speaks to the chorus of Troezenian women about her struggle against her passion. The Nurse persuades the queen to let her approach Hippolytus.	Phaedra is determined to die but the Nurse persuades her to let her approach Hippolytus on her behalf.	It is reported that Theseus is dead, and the Nurse therefore persuades Phaedra to let her approach Hippolytus, in the interest of her children's future safety.
		Hippolytus reveals his love to Aricie and pledges to pardon her now that his father is dead, and leave her in control of Athens.

Euripides' <i>Hippolytus</i>	Seneca's <i>Phaedra</i>	Racine's <i>Phèdre</i>
Hippolytus is outraged at the Nurse's proposition (and speaks a tirade against womankind) but swears to keep silent.	Phaedra herself confesses her love directly to Hippolytus, in the presence of the Nurse. He is outraged and reacts to Phaedra's attempts to touch him by drawing his sword. As much as Phaedra longs for death at his hands, he does not comply, however he leaves the sword behind on leaving the stage.	Phaedra reveals her love to Hippolytus who is outraged, but Phaedra too admits to hating herself for her love and grabs Hippolytus' sword, determined to kill herself.
Phaedra is ashamed and angry (at the Nurse) and hangs herself, leaving a note accusing Hippolytus of rape.		
Theseus returns to find his wife dead and his son accused. He calls upon Neptune to curse his son.	Theseus returns to find both his wife and son distraught. Phaedra uses the sword to accuse Hippolytus of rape. Theseus curses his son.	It is revealed that Theseus is alive and has returned. Phaedra is determined to die but the Nurse persuades her let her use the sword to accuse Hippolytus of rape.

Euripides' <i>Hippolytus</i>	Seneca's <i>Phaedra</i>	Racine's <i>Phèdre</i>
Theseus and Hippolytus argue but Hippolytus is unable to reveal the true reason for his innocence. He is banished.		The Nurse accuses Hippolytus of rape to Theseus. Theseus and Hippolytus argue; Theseus curses his son and Hippolytus refuses to reveal the truth, hoping that revealing his love for Aricie will exonerate him (it has the opposite effect; Theseus thinks he is lying and is even more angry).
		Phaedra considers telling Theseus the truth, but stops out of jealousy when Theseus reveals that Hippolytus loves Aricie. She is angry with her Nurse for interfering and banishes her.

Euripides' <i>Hippolytus</i>	Seneca's <i>Phaedra</i>	Racine's <i>Phèdre</i>
		<p>Aricie and Hippolytus decide to flee together. Aricie, like Hippolytus, will not reveal the true reason but asserts Hippolytus' innocence to Theseus, causing him to have second thoughts about his curse.</p>
		<p>It is revealed that the Nurse has killed herself and Theseus is determined to hear his son's case again.</p>
<p>The Messenger tells the tale of Hippolytus' chariot being overrun by a bull from the sea and his master dashed near the rocks and near death.</p>	<p>The Messenger tells of Hippolytus' bloody death, dismembered by his horses thrown into a frenzy by a sea monster.</p>	<p>Theseus is too late, and Hippolytus' companion reveals he has been killed, dragged to death by his horses terrified by a monster from the sea.</p>

Euripides' <i>Hippolytus</i>	Seneca's <i>Phaedra</i>	Racine's <i>Phèdre</i>
Artemis proclaims Hippolytus' innocence by revealing Aphrodite's plan to his father.	Theseus regrets his curse. Phaedra comes on stage to reveal the truth of her passion and Hippolytus' innocence to her husband. She stabs herself with Hippolytus' sword determined to continue pursuing her love in the underworld.	Phaedra confirms Hippolytus' innocence to Theseus, and blames her Nurse for the rape accusation. She reveals she has taken poison and dies.
The dying Hippolytus is brought on stage and Artemis helps to reconcile father and son before Hippolytus dies.	Theseus laments as he attempts to reassemble his son's body for burial. He finishes with a harsh judgement against Phaedra.	Theseus is reconciled with Aricie over mutual love for his dead son.

Appendix B

Interview Transcripts

B.1 Interview with Richard Alston

Question 1: What brought you to the Phaedra? How did you become interested in choreographing this work?

The most banal answer is economics, but having said that, we knew we were doing *Les Illuminations*, and having said that, that meant that I could look at anything really that Britten had written that was basically for string orchestra. And somehow or other my attention alighted on Phaedra, which I had never really heard. So the first thing I did was listen to it and I suddenly thought: ‘this is really wonderful’, and I loved the fact that it had a baroque continuo, that it had a harpsichord and a cello and that it was in a way like a scene from an opera. Like scenes from Haydn and from Monteverdi when Ariana, or whatever, one Greek heroine... So when I proposed it, people who were organising it got very excited and Britten Sinfonia got very excited and said: ‘oh yes, we can perform that.’ So that’s how it came about.

And then I listened to it a lot to think about how I could – I’m very aware with Britten that I want to try and do something that he would have related to, I don’t want to impose something that is an alien idea on top of it. So that’s why, having decided to work with a soprano, and Allison was recommended to us, and she was very eager to do it, in a way I made all the choreography around Phaedra not dancing beyond

– moving yes, but in way so that she could be absolutely free to sing. And so that's why in that sense Hippolytus became a very important presence and Oenone too, her maid, she was very important. Theseus is a stiff old character, you know, his part in the story, he's not an attractive character. You know he was like a kind of cipher, he was the king and he was the father and in both he was disapproving. To me the weak point in the myth is that it is just so over the top to call in Neptune, that's what I find difficult about the myth. Everything's fine and that's just such an extraordinary extreme reaction.

And then you were saying that you were also particularly interested in Hippolytus and I was very intrigued by Hippolytus. He seemed to me, he seems to me really, extremely beautiful and not very pleasant, he's really very priggish and yet deeply into his own beauty. You know the reason why she fell for him was because she caught sight of him oiling himself after in the gymnasium and so on. He was obviously very proud of his body and didn't mind prancing around with no clothes on. And yet he was, never mind it was his stepmother, up until then he seemed to have been completely uninterested in women and absolutely about the goddess he worshipped. So that's it. It's very intriguing and very strange, that someone who is very puritanical and very very beautiful, a very strange combination.

Question 2: In my research on the Phaedra character, I have noticed that dance and opera can lend her a voice that perhaps she doesn't have in some versions of the myth. And in this piece, Phaedra is the only speaking character. However you tell so much of the rest of the story through the movement, enabling the audience to see parts of the story they wouldn't get otherwise. Can you tell us a bit more about that process?

I suppose, in a way, I guess I took my lead, if you like, from the fact that Britten himself wrote *Death in Venice* where there is basically only one singing character and the boy and the family and the other children and the mother are all silent. And

actually I'm not certain it is easy to make that work for a whole opera, but I thought I've got to do the same sort of thing within 13 minutes or whatever it is. And I found it impossible not to warm to Phaedra. She's incredibly aware of her own weakness and she's caught up in an obsession which she can't control. So I find her quite, I don't find her a monster at all, I find her a very sympathetic character who finds herself obsessed and I think also I think that resonates hugely with Britten because Britten spent quite a part of his life being very uptight about sex and not being able to cope with W.H. Auden, not being able to cope with other 'out there' homosexuals, he found that very very difficult, and it was only getting together with Pears that was quite late in his life. So to me Britten's subject is often guilt, is often repressed feeling, and in that sense that's what Phaedra is absolutely about. She cannot tell, the only person she's really told is Oenone, and she gets the wrong advice from her.

Question 3: Tell us about the process of choreographing the piece.

I started with her, with the opening image, these amazing and wonderful chimes and this fantastically dramatic opening, and so I started with her and with the dancers all around her. And she walks forward and the whole situation is suddenly made clear. And then I really worked with her on where to move and how to be and where she would feel comfortable. She didn't need to be looking at the conductor because the conductor was at the back, but she did need to be able to project her voice. So she would say to me, can I not be standing here at this moment because this is a very quiet moment and I don't want to bellow it out, so I need to really make sure that I'm in contact. So she was very down to earth about that. And then when I'd plotted what I wanted to do for about five minutes or so of the piece, then I said: 'I need you to just wait, I now need to tell the dancers what I want them to do.' And there was this wonderful moment when Allison said: 'Richard that's extraordinary.' 'What's extraordinary?' 'They do what you say, singers never do that. They say, do I have to do that, or is that really what my character is, or I can't really use my lungs if I'm in

this position. You just say something and they do it.’ And I said: ‘well, that’s what we do Allison.’

So you know, you talked about Graham. Graham definitely I think made a really interesting and very strong link with Greek chorus, so I thought OK, so that’s really who these people are. They are the chorus that comments, that cannot affect things, but that can express their dismay and can invoke all sorts of judgements and explain and then also very often tell you the terrible things that are happening off stage. So I quite enjoyed that principle of using the dancers that way.

And I think some people possibly were disappointed because they didn’t see any kind of rampant sex going on, but that was the whole point, she didn’t do it, he said no, he never said yes. [Laughs] So it was her rejection and then it was her discovery and the fact that I suppose she only told, she told Theseus too late really, didn’t she. She told him once Hippolytus was dead.

Question 4: What were your influences, in terms of the story, was it just Britten or did you do any more reading around the myth? Did you read any original texts or any other versions?

I read Racine. I went up to the Red House the summer before, I suppose the summer of 2013, and it was extraordinary that in the Britten archive they have a small display at any one time and when I was there they had the score for *Phaedra*, which is cut down so it’s a square, like that, because he was so ill that he couldn’t reach to the top of a score, he was so weak, and yet the thing is wonderfully scored, they cut down the score for him. That was extraordinarily moving to see. But also even more extraordinary was the paperback, the Robert Lowell paperback, with just little pencil lines under the lines that he had chosen to set. You realise how carefully he judged them.

Because one of the fascinating things for me was to know the full story, to actually think I cannot include Aricie. I can’t include the princess who he goes off with, there

can be no happy ending, well there wasn't anyway because then he got killed. I thought it's just so short and this is about Phaedra and its 13 minutes and I have to show that relationship, of the two people who cause her to end up taking poison are Hippolytus and Theseus and those are really important and then she has to have – I thought an awful lot also about *Dido and Aeneas* and that wonderful operatic structure and the fact that Belinda is so important. That there is an attendant, there is someone who can support a heroine in trouble. Or an anti-heroine in trouble, whatever. So that's why I also thought it would be interesting to make Oenone, to make Nancy, who's a very strong – and she's Greek – to make her the attendant who really expresses strong emotional feelings for Phaedra, for her mistress. And who moves. And then the men's dance in the middle is really just to kind of show, there's this wonderful percussion section, and I thought, well, actually that really gives, that really is in its quiet way showing you the kind of real macho attitude of Greek men. And some of it is still there, actually, but Ancient Greeks you know were absolutely about male athletics.

Question 5: I was interested in how you captured the conflict between father and son, because you don't hear that.

James was very good as Theseus, I thought he was very good. He's got a wonderful frown. He worries a lot when he's thinking about movement. I said: 'for once James I'm not going to tell you not to frown.' That's quite Theseus to have this self importance.

Question 6: Where there any things in particular you were looking for when casting the dancers?

At one point I thought of there being a singing and a dancing Phaedra and I thought Nancy would be amazing at that but then I said, Nancy, no, Allison's got an amazing presence and we can involve her moving without doing pirouettes or splits. That she

can just move and be dramatically within the centre of it but then you can move much more being her friend, being her attendant, so I wanted her to be Oenone. And I purposely chose really the youngest member of the company to be Hippolytus. Because there's something about Ishaan's character, he's quite young, he's quite serious, he's very serious. So he's not narcissistic, he's not indulgent, in the fact that actually he's got a very beautiful body, he's very, you can see he could be a Hippolytus, but he's also – I had to kind of work with him on so, saying, you just can't bear to be touched by her. I'm not going to ask you to suddenly be arrogant and, but quite sadistic he is, the way he rejects her he is just absolutely horrified in the most sort of priggish sort of way. Ugh. You know. 'I am so out of your league', that's really what he's saying. So it was the first thing that Ishaan did with the company and it worked really well because he really rose to it.

Question 7: In a lot of adaptations Hippolytus' race emphasises his otherness; he is a half-breed with an Amazon mother. It struck me that you used a black dancer for Hippolytus – was that deliberate or more about him in particular?

Well, he's not the only black dancer, there was another one too. I chose him because he was young, I chose him because I thought there was a sort of extraordinary dignity about the way Ishaan danced even though he's very young. But he's grown a lot since then. He did it instinctively then, which is wonderful. I very much enjoy the fact that dance can very easily cross cultural barriers. I like that very much. Unless there's just no possibility I always always try to make sure I don't have an all-white company. I don't think that's a fair representation of the human race and you know, all, we all dance. And there's so much now, and I find it very fascinating there here in this school there are a whole bunch of young mostly men who come from hip hop, who come from East London, who come from hip hop and bring that culture here because they want to learn something different. And in this country the cross between south

Asian dance and the huge Pakistani and Indian communities here and that is part of the British identity and I really love that. So yes I think, I certainly was happy about it. It wasn't like I chose it, oh I'm going to make Hippolytus non-white, but I do think actually what I think I was saying was, so this is supposed to be someone who is really beautiful, and yes, I think that all men of all colours and all races in different ways they can be really beautiful. So he can certainly be Hippolytus.

Question 8: Was this a one-off?

We're going to do it again. Aldeburgh is going to put it together again with us in the Autumn of 2016. We'll do a weekend, there's a Britten weekend that they have every Autumn, so in 2016 that's what we're hoping, it's not confirmed yet. We think Allison's free and there's a new guy, Roger Wright, he programmes, he loves my work and would love to have us. It would be wonderful to be able to do it again.

You can do for example *Lacrimae* I did for string orchestra, but there is also a version for piano and viola. And so we can do that. But sometimes with *Les Illuminations* we do it with a recording but you can't have a recording when the singer's involved. What are you going to have, someone miming in the middle. So I made it, in a way it was very special and it's been impossible to do it since. So it's great that we can do it again.

Question 9: How was it received?

Yes, I think it was very well received. It was nominated for all sorts of awards, Olivier awards and things, and I had prepared a speech, you have to prepare a speech, you have to be ready, and I wanted to say, if I did get up there: 'Well this is wonderful, thank you very very much, I have to tell you I can't really remember it.' I make work very quickly and I take a very long time to look at it and I've been looking at the Hoderlein fragments and I've been looking at *Lacrimae* and I've been looking at all the

other pieces, but *Phaedra* we did with a live singer, three performances and I've not seen it. I have to take your word for it that it was good. So it would be quite exciting to have a chance to go back and see if I'm going to go, 'ugh.'

Question 10: Have you done anything else like this with singers?

A piece called *Nennia* by Harrison Birtwhistle about Orpheus, and it's a female singer soprano I think rather than a mezzo, and it's a wonderful strange terse piece of music for three bass clarinets, I think they are, very very dark sounding clarinets and little percussion, like little, like, Chinese symbols that make a very delicate sound, and a piano. And we had them all on stage and the singer wasn't really, she was like the chorus. She moved, and she moved around and we just had two dancers, Orpheus and Eurydice. And to me the great triumphant moment was that after we'd done it, it was done for Harry's 60th birthday, so that's a long time ago because he's 80 now, and I asked him if I could do *Nennia* and he was quite guarded about dancing, he doesn't really like dance and he has a very extreme sense of theatre with lots of bulls and blood, but he said to me after the performance, he said, 'well that worked really well, Richard, and actually I think it worked so well I don't think that *Nennia* should be performed without some sort of theatrical element, I can see that it actually brings the piece alive.' He's really quite physically quite an awkward man and not comfortable about movement so his sense of theatre is really about ritual. He has got a very strong sense of theatre and writes very varied theatrical music, I think, but some of his most, some of the music that's not intended to be theatre music, I think, is sometimes his most theatrical.

I couldn't have done *Phaedra* if I hadn't done *Nennia*. And Allison did much more, because Allison was incredibly, she was absolutely up for it, she was very excited, she's a very adventurous young singer. It was quite fun, I really treated her like a diva. She wasn't a diva at all, but the designer and I said you can wear whatever you like. You want your dress to be like this, you can do whatever you like. We want you to be

comfortable and we also want you to feel confident and feel dignified.

B.2 Interview with George Roumanis

Question 1: Tell us about your background.

My parents were both born in Greece and I was born 78 years ago. And when they came to this country, they wanted to become real Americans, and there were six of us, six children, and they wouldn't teach us Greek when we were infants. They wanted to become Americans, Americans, Americans, and that's what they would say in Greece, America, America, America. And as a result of that, the only real connections we had outside of our relatives was the mythology. They didn't, my mother especially, talk about fairy tales or anything, we talked about Theseus and finding his way out of the labyrinth, Daedalus or Actaeus and all these different kinds of stories, the Trojan horse. So I grew up with this, very interested in the Greek mythology.

Question 2: Tell us about your musical background as well, where you started, the different phases of your career.

I was a jazz musician, a very successful one from 18 years old. In high school I was quite an exceptional musician. When I graduated, in those days, there were a lot of famous orchestras touring the country, part of the culture over here, and I toured with these different bands and I played the bass and it was mostly jazz at that point that I was interested in.

And as time went on, I started to write music for all kinds of commercials. A lot of famous commercials in this country. Then I started being able to make a decent living where I could afford to do things. I didn't go to a major university or anything. They didn't have schools that offer kind of music development. So I decided at this time that I would be tutored, my musical education would be one that would be tutored by people that are really respected and I could choose who I wanted. And I took lessons

from different people.

I started learning more and more, I started getting really interested in music. There came a time when I could afford to move my family, I was about 36 years old, to Hollywood to write for movies because there I had the chance to really start to write music rather than just jazz or commercial sort of things in New York. So when I went to Los Angeles, I found a teacher, his name was George Tremblay. And he is a man beyond your imagination with such a high IQ, he could teach me Shakespeare, he could teach me composition, we could discuss ballet, we could discuss almost anything. True Renaissance man.

Question 3: *Ode to Phaedra* is your only opera; how did you get interested in tackling an opera?

[Tremblay] kept saying ‘You’re a born opera composer’ and I said ‘Well, I’m not interested in opera. I don’t even know if I like it’, he said ‘Well, you will someday’ and it was very prophetic. One day a friend of mine that played French horn with a little opera company called me up and said ‘We’ve only got tickets to go to see Wagner’ and we all went, my teacher, and my wife and myself, and I sat in that audience, I was just absolutely, I can’t even find the proper words to describe it; I was so enthralled with what I saw. I fell in love with opera. Love at first sight, first hearing, whatever.

[Tremblay asked] ‘What are you going to do?’, ‘Well, I’m going to write an opera, that’s what I’m going to do.’ He said ‘Well, what are you going to write about?’ and I said ‘I’m going to write about the thing I know best, my Greek mythology and I want to write it down, Phaedra.’ And that was it.

So every week I had a lesson and I kept working on the different ideas, Wagner and almost every opera composer I started listening to. Then I really got into it. I started out with a major opera company in my mind. I want chorus, I want four soloists, I want dancing; I want everything.

And he looked at me, he said ‘How about you just [write an] opera for three people,

maybe a piano' and I said 'That's no fun.' He kept saying to me, 'It's a dramatic work you have to write. You have to write a major dramatic work' and nothing can compare to an opera, because you have all the instruments in the orchestra, and on top of that you have the dissonances of all the human voice. And if you want to express your music to the highest degree possible then you need all these things.

And then visually you need your ballet, you need all these things. I said 'This is what I want to do' and he said 'Well, you've got to do it.' That's what I did. That went on for four or five years, I kept working on it in my spare time. The whole thing was a libretto per se, word for word, I knew what I wanted to say and I knew what the story was about, where it was going.

Question 4: Do you remember what year you finished it?

Yes, I finished the opera roughly around 1978. Around '78 I abandoned it and wrote on the score, 'I'm kidding myself.' Then about two years later I see things I want to change. And so technically it was finished around '78 or '79. When I finished it, it just went into my trunk where most people that compose music go, it goes in your trunk because nobody knew me; I'm not a known opera composer. And then when I moved up to northern California where I am now, I'm outside of San Jose. And Opera San Jose every year would do one new opera.

I met the head of the opera company and I played her just an excerpt from my opera that I had recorded and she fell in love with it. And after a lot of negotiations took place, she said 'I'm going to do it next year' and that was 1991. Then I met with her conductor and her director and choreographer and then we started talking about the different things that I had in mind. Then I started rewriting it all over again. Because now I knew it was becoming a reality, there were certain things in the structure of the opera I didn't like.

Question 5: Can you take me through the opera and how you came up

with the different scenes and the different changes that you made?

I retrogressed back to when my teacher and I were discussing opera. I get my book on all my Greek famous writers and all, and start looking. Oh, Euripides, oh, what's Euripides? Start going through and I can't find a play called Phaedra. So I start reading every one of the plays and here it comes, Hippolytus. And I read it again and again, and like I said, my teacher was such a literary man too, he says 'Don't forget you've got Racine, you've got Seneca, different people and there was a movie made of it and all these different things.'

And then I realised that everybody, every creative, like myself, you have to make a project your own. Unless you're a director of a movie and you're doing like Shakespeare or something like that, then you're going to pretty much stick to it, but you're going to change the costumes maybe and little minor things like that. Still, it changes when the composer takes on like Hippolytus and Euripides and Racine.

The only place that really felt right to me, I guess it's because of my parents and all, was Euripides. And I loved the idea of the gods and goddesses and Aphrodite and Artemis and how they're actually accomplished. I didn't want it to be so heavy in nature, it's kind of like a satire in a way in my mind; deadly serious business, but the Greeks were so phenomenal with the way they treat the gods explicitly, that really got my imagination.

So when I started it, I could not have it so rigid with Hippolytus so dedicated to the animal world and all that. And Aphrodite, well, she never changes. How am I going to have Aphrodite in the play and how am I going to do these kind of things? Well, that's the beauty of an opera and multimedia ... I wanted Aphrodite to be the real narrator of the whole opera, and she doesn't have words, but kind of leads you emotionally where we're going, and it's really delicate and it's really primitive. Also, I wanted Oenone to have a major part in this opera.

Hippolytus right away from the beginning, he's down there with Olympia celebrating. And the brief period of Greece, the dancing and the rhythms and language,

they're all mixed up; they would write seven beats in a bar, nine beats in a bar, where traditional western music would be four four, four three. So I had that in my opera, strange little rhythms. Aphrodite's music [leitmotif] was based on the American blues, a lot of different kind of harmonies, that's what I used as my inspiration on that. I'm an American composer; I wanted it to have that feel.

The relationship between Theseus and Phaedra is on a very high level. He worships her and she treats him with the most respect, and I want that in the opera . . . I didn't want to lose the basic [plot] of the Euripides, no way would I fool with the Euripides when writing the play. There was no Olympic games in Euripides, but it's real nice to have that big chorus up there celebrating and dancing, drinking wine . . . and that's the Greek culture, that's what we're talking about.

Hippolytus and Phaedra also get together in the second act, and that didn't happen in the Euripides like that. As they get together they have great attraction. In this production they do look the part, and they have a way of finding each other, falling in love, expressing their desire, and . . . here we go again with the strange rhythms, . . . seven or eight beats to a bar instead of more like the western, and then that builds up to a point where she can't stand it. And now they're so complicated to each other, they're overcome and he thinks of his father.

[After Phaedra's suicide and rape accusation], Theseus' anger takes place on the stage to counterpoint that. One thing that you're always trying to do when writing serious music, write counterpoints, you want something that seems unrelated that is related.

Phaedra's dead, where's my trio? And I thought why can't it be Aphrodite pulling the strings, that can manipulate anybody and she is a protagonist too, she's part of it. That's my concept anyway. And so Aphrodite brings Phaedra back, and there is a trio. What's going on is a three-part convention in music; there's three different things that are all singing a different story, it all adds up to the same thing. This is all going on at the same time, all three of them, and Theseus is overwhelmed and he dies, allegedly, I suppose a heart attack.

Question 6: In your opera Theseus and Phaedra are dead at the end and Hippolytus is still alive. Why did you make that change?

I guess I wanted him to survive. Theseus survives in Euripides, correct? Morally, I'm on the side of Hippolytus. Theseus made a big mistake when he married a woman much too young for him. Maybe his power as the king grants him that right. But I think that this wouldn't have happened if he was in a proper place, he didn't marry a woman 25 years younger than he was. That caused the problem, so I look at it, if I was one of the Greek gods I would say 'Wait a minute, why are you doing this?' well naturally every man wants a younger woman, every older woman would fantasise about a younger man too.

In my mind, Hippolytus had to survive because he's the future. He's learnt his lesson, and to live by it he must survive. So I really violated the mythology with that. It just doesn't seem right that the old man with the young woman teases his son in a way. I hate being wrong when I know I'm right. Even in mythology, why would Theseus survive Hippolytus?

Question 7: You also added another death, not just Theseus but Oenone as well, tell me why that happened?

Fascinating in a way. Oenone knows all, she's almost like a prophetic person who can see into the future. She gets a feeling, she kind of knows everything in advance. And she's going along, hoping against fate that it won't happen. I don't think she died in Euripides. Maybe her death was the beginning of Phaedra's death. She had to die too. I said 'Well, is Oenone really there?' this is mythology, it's so fascinating. You see Aphrodite, but is there really an Aphrodite. Greece wanted us to control and be moral Gods come in here, and just as you think you've got it together and everything gets confused again. That's what makes a great opera. Opera is fantastic, amazing,

an illusion. So I guess Oenone, she got into that, her character led it this way. Still, no matter how we play with it, the basic theme never changes, does it? No. The older man marries the younger woman and the young man, his son, gets attracted to her. ...it never seems to change.

Question 8: The goddesses are absent in many modern adaptations, but the way you have that musical, visual cue to Aphrodite really works.

In truth it's powerful, it's sentiment. All these little things are so important to all that's happening when you go and see an opera, but unfortunately if you're sitting in the balcony you can't get it. Or now with your live performances, you have multimedia. And then the projection going on against people performing on the stage. There's all kinds of things that you get. I think it's necessary to let the audience see what's really going on and what was in the composer's and the librettist's mind, the playwright's mind.

And that's my attempt to try to do it, the way we did the video. Edited it. The expression of some of the singers' faces are just terrific but you can't see at the back of the audience. With the camera we can zoom in, take a close-up of that. So that's pretty much where we're going. In my case, I'm living in the twenty-first century, I wanted to use the tools that we have. All they do is enhance the music production constantly.

Question 9: Why did you call it *Ode to Phaedra*?

When I started out, I called it *Phaedra*. Then a friend of mine called up from New England saying 'Gee, I was driving through a town and I think they were doing your opera' I said 'No, they're not doing my opera' he said 'Well, it was Phaedra' oh, it was? Then I started thinking 'Wait a minute, wait a minute. There's a movie called *Phaedra*.' I used the name first Phaedra because you have to have that 'A' to sing.

Phaedra. You need those syllables to get that word out. I think that ode, in my mind, is like a little poem to Phaedra, where I can have Aphrodite messing around, I can have Oenone get stabbed, I can let Hippolytus survive. Because it's an ode. That's my way of coping out I guess. An ode takes the curse off the heavy drama, ode. The opera's an omen.

I care about this production because I'm so proud of it. I don't think any opera company could do it much better than that, especially not visually. I put it on the internet for one reason; I knew in my heart somebody will see it, and I got the call from you. I think Oenone's helping me. That's what I wanted. I just wanted it to be seen by somebody, enjoy it. I'm not pursuing a career as an opera composer. I did my opera, my teacher said that I was a natural composer and I fulfilled my obligations.